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# *The Day of Light*

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THE BIBLICAL AND LITURGICAL  
MEANING OF SUNDAY

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V.M.P.

SIMILITER PUDICAE, NON DETRAHENTI,  
SOBRIAE, FIDELI IN OMNIBUS



## PREFACE

OF all Christian practices, the observance of Sunday as a weekly holiday is one of the most universal. What does this day mean? The question is not often asked. A more familiar question is, how should Sunday be spent? That question is ever with us. May the children give up Sunday School this week in order to join their friends on a picnic? Should our neighbours see us working in the garden during church time on Sundays when we ourselves attend an earlier (or later) service? Is it worth the struggle to take the two babies to church or should mother stay home till they are older? Such problems plague the committed Christian man or woman. In the twentieth century, unlike the nineteenth, society as a whole does little to help the individual or the family to overcome the obstacles involved.

Such practical questions cannot be met unless we first face the more basic problem of what Sunday is. What does it mean? What is its significance? In this present study, therefore, we will not be concerned with arguing for the duty of Sunday observance. We shall, rather, seek to understand the Christian tradition of the Lord's Day on its own merits, and to allow this tradition to speak to us in its own authentic biblical and liturgical language. We will find that Sunday is not only something to be understood, but that it in turn can itself give us a fuller understanding of the Gospel. Like the Creeds, the Ministry, and the Sacraments, it is one of those basic Christian institutions through which the message of the Word of God is communicated, and by which Christ shapes and moulds the lives of those who accept him as their Lord.

Sunday is a day when the Bible is publicly read, and it is also a day which provides a certain framework for that reading. The symbolism of Sunday itself, as we shall see, can aid us in pondering the Word of God. Sunday is a day when the sacraments are administered, and also a day which provides the doctrinal background for the sacraments. The meaning of the Lord's Day makes

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them more intelligible. It was a major error of the nineteenth century Church Revival that it sought to force the meaning of the Eucharist on to Sunday instead of accepting the meaning of Sunday for the Eucharist. Outside of church, Sunday is a day of Christian rest and recreation, and also a day that can give the Christian a far deeper insight into the means of living a happy and well-rounded life. So far from being a burden, the Lord's Day can be and should be one of our greatest resources for living the Christian life and for authenticating within our own experience the reality of

' . . . the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.'

(Eph. 1.19, 20).

The first two chapters of this study are historical. We shall briefly survey the origin and symbolism of the seven-day week, and see how the First Day of the week has gained and held its distinctive place during Christian history. In the three central chapters, we shall examine biblical ideas associated with the Lord's Day. In the remainder of the book, we shall see how these ideas have found liturgical expression in the Eucharist and in other rites customarily performed on this day.

Throughout this study we shall be seeking to apply biblical patterns of thought and expression. Quotations will normally be drawn from the Authorized Version, but occasionally a more literal rendering will be followed. We shall also draw frequently from liturgical writings, the Church Fathers, and a few more modern sources. In the case of standard and well-known texts, or ancient writings that are accessible in numerous modern translations, we shall usually give only the accepted chapter or section citations. Those who are able to read the Fathers in Greek or Latin will presumably already know how to go about doing so. It has seemed more useful, therefore, to arrange most of the footnotes of the present volume to serve the needs of readers who have less technical background. In the hope that ordinary Christians may be encouraged to work out for themselves further implications of



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our topic, a large number of suggestive biblical references have been included in the notes.

We have sought to use quotations not as dead historical documents; rather they have been introduced in the hope of addressing them to the living faith of the reader. In dealing with such a topic, it is unnecessary to apologize for including material of a prayerful nature. It is only within the context of committed Christian faith and practice that the significance of Sunday can be seriously discussed.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# THE AGE OF THE OLD ISRAEL

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day' (Gen. 1.1-5).

PEOPLE generally have an awareness that the special observance of the first day of the week is based on Holy Scripture. Yet it may come as a surprise to recall that the first chapter of the first book of the Bible opens with Sunday and that it is again on Sunday that the last chapter of the last book closes. The authority for the Lord's Day rests on no single passage, nor on any single commandment. It rests rather on the message of the Sacred Scriptures as a whole. Yet to see that whole, we must start at the beginning.

If biblical criticism has achieved nothing else, it has at least shown us the sophisticated character of the Creation Story. We can no longer suppose, as our grandparents did, that this is a naïve myth which Hebrew shepherds composed for their children as they sat around their campfires. Primitive elements are indeed contained within it. Yet the text as it has ultimately come down to us is the result of careful editing and rewriting by men who combined deep theological learning with equally deep literary art. These sacred writers set themselves to no easy task: to declare to us the primacy of the Almighty over all things, to show that even in a world inhabited by free and sinful beings all initiative lies in the hands of the one Everlasting God. He is the Beginner of all beginnings; all beginnings are his. This is a metaphysical truth, a cosmological truth, and a present moral and spiritual truth in the

experience of the faithful—yet these truths are somehow all one single truth. For these lofty thoughts to be presented, visible facts, metaphors, allusions, and fleeting memories of age-old tales are all woven together.<sup>1</sup> And so the sacred epic of Genesis opens.

At the bidding of the Almighty, the world dawns as a day, first with twilight, then the appearance of the landscape, the waking of birds and beasts to life, and finally man going forth to his labour. Or the world opens like a new year at God's command, with the scattering of the clouds, the drying of the winter's floods, the springing up of plants, the multiplying of animals and of men. God has worked as an artisan at his bench, first kindling his light a great while before the day, then arranging his materials, then forming increasingly wonderful creatures. He completes his task by fashioning a final being like even to himself, and then retires. The great Artificer went to work as a labourer at the beginning of the week, and as a wise workman he ordered his undertaking. Apportioning his several different tasks to different days, he finishes them in six days and then enjoys rest on the seventh. Modelling an ingenious jug<sup>2</sup> into the shape of himself, he blows his life-giving breath into the aperture at the top, and it becomes alive. So human history begins, as it always must begin, with the innocent, carefree, naked happiness of childhood. But the human, this being modelled from humus, begins to grow, and like all children causes his Father many heartaches, and he finally grows to adulthood, marries, and moves away from his childhood home. And so it ever is. . . .

Here is every day, every week, every year, and the life-span of every man. But our story as we have it is most concerned over one specific time, the week. In the age when our text was completed, the week was clearly considered by the sacred writers as an institution of the utmost sanctity, the observance of which draws the

<sup>1</sup> For a scholarly discussion of the earlier cosmological ideas which provide the imagery of the Creation story, a most convenient source is still John Skinner's *Genesis*, the first volume of the International Critical Commentary, New York, 1910. See particularly pp. 44-50.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 56. Cf. Isa. 29.16; 64.8; etc.



life of man toward the life of God. The weekly round is constituted by counting seven days. It is the unique holiness of the seventh day, the day toward which each week moves, which establishes the cycle. Sunday, the first day as we know it, only has its existence with a seven-day week. If we would understand Sunday we must first briefly survey the formation of the week and of the seventh day or Sabbath, which defined it.

We are here dealing with one of the most ancient institutions in our life. When the weeks first began to be observed we do not know. There is no reasonable doubt, however, that the hebdomadal or seven-day division was originally based on the twenty-eight days of the lunar month. The latter has been used as a measure of time by early peoples almost everywhere. Living much of their life out of doors, and having poor means of artificial illumination, primitive peoples are keenly aware of the night sky.

Desert travellers, like sailors, had been steering their course by the stars for untold centuries when that new Star led three magis to Bethlehem of Judah. In time of war, even we twentieth century people learn that the light of the moon can be a question of life or death for a city. For early peoples, the supernatural character of the lunar month was confirmed by other inexplicable phenomena following the same pattern: weather, tides, and the physiological cycle of the daughters of Eve.

The seven-day week undoubtedly arose as a natural subdivision of the month, each week corresponding to a quarter of the moon's cycle. Curiously enough, however, most ancient people did not choose this particular division. The efficient and methodical Romans continued for centuries with their clumsy three-fold division of the month. In the Near East, however, the hebdomadal week was widely observed, and the Hebrews among others adopted it. The uniqueness of the Sabbath day, the seventh day defining the week, follows naturally from adopting the latter. It was the lunar month which provided the original sanction for the whole system, and in the more ancient portions of the Old Testament, the Sabbath is regularly mentioned in connection with the



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observance of the new moon.<sup>1</sup> Originally it was quite likely the Sabbath *night*, rather than the Sabbath *day*, which was religiously important. In any case, the Jews have always continued to consider that each day begins at sundown of the preceding evening, as opposed to our Gentile system of regarding midnight as the division between one day and the next.

After the Deuteronomic Reform under King Josiah (621 BC),<sup>2</sup> the lunar character of the week seems to have been deliberately placed in the background with the suppression of the fertility cults and their associated practices. The Lord of Hosts must rule alone, and the Sabbath day must be kept holy unto him. The sanctity of the number seven was evidently well established. Astronomy gave it another basis, independent of the lunar month: namely the seven major heavenly bodies known to ancient peoples. The seven-fold lamp of the Temple at Jerusalem<sup>3</sup> is immediately suggestive both of the seven astronomic luminaries and of seven days. As is well known, so great was the appeal of seven that it became the standard number governing many aspects of the thought and religious ritual of Judaism.

Contrary to what ultimately became the universal Gentile practice, the Jews did not name the days after the luminaries. Sunday was simply the First Day;<sup>4</sup> Monday, the Second Day; and so until Saturday which had the special appellation 'Sabbath'. The importance of the latter led, by New Testament times, to Friday becoming known as 'the Preparation.'<sup>5</sup> It will be seen that the First Day for the Jews had much the significance of Monday for us. It was the day on which shop-keepers reopened their stalls, and labourers returned to their work. This was reflected in the Creation Story. In New Testament times, there is a penitential element entering the Jewish week, for the pious are now fasting

<sup>1</sup> II Kings 4.23; Isa. 1.13; Ezek. 45.17; Hos. 2.11; Amos 8.5; etc.

<sup>2</sup> II Kings 22, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Ex. 25.31-40.

<sup>4</sup> In Hebrew and in Greek the literal words are 'One Day', the cardinal rather than the ordinal adjective being used here; so likewise in several other biblical references to Sunday.

<sup>5</sup> Mark 15.42; John 19.31, 42.

on Mondays and Thursdays.<sup>1</sup> There does not appear to have been any special significance to these days as such; convenience probably prompted the choice of days not proximate to the Sabbath and with two days between them.

For the Jew, the whole conception of the week became subordinate to the Sabbath. This was the day on which man could share the rest of God; the knowledge of this day showed that the Jews, alone among the nations of the earth, had true fellowship with their Creator.<sup>2</sup> Like circumcision, it had certainly not first originated among the Jews, but by the Graeco-Roman period these two practices were generally regarded as among the most distinctive marks of Judaism.<sup>3</sup> As a holiday for man and beast, the Sabbath represented a tremendous advance in humanitarian feeling. As a day when all classes of the population can hear the Law expounded, the Sabbath doubtless has played a great rôle in the intellectual development of the Jewish people. For Rabbinic Judaism, however, the value of the Sabbath depends on no ulterior or incidental benefits: the joy of the Sabbath is the privilege of being able to know and obey the commands of the Almighty, whose Name is ever Blessed.

Whatever faith one professes, one cannot fail to admire such a spirit. Yet it is precisely this emphasis on utter obedience that led to the absurd multiplication of ritual restrictions surrounding the Sabbath which finally made the day more of a burden than a rest. Likewise it was this very certainty that they did possess the knowledge of God's will which led to the impious arrogance of the Pharisees. For the scribes, the joy of the Sabbath was not the self-forgetful pleasure of obedience, but the egotistical pleasure of

<sup>1</sup> Luke 18.12; *Didache*, viii. The text of the latter (also known as *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*) will be found in any modern edition of the collection known as the *Apostolic Fathers*.

<sup>2</sup> This conception is clearly expressed, for instance, in the Kiddush for the Sabbath Evening. This and other items in the modern Jewish liturgy will be readily found in the English portion of Rabbi Simeon Singer's *The Standard Prayer Book*, a well-known work available in various editions.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. I Macc. 1.45-8.

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imposing obedience on others.<sup>1</sup> The Sabbath had come to represent the very opposite of its original purpose. The Son of man, declaring himself Lord of the Sabbath, had repeatedly to challenge its observance.

Yet he came not to break the Law, but to fulfil it. As in Creation, he finished his earthly labours on the afternoon of the Sixth Day, and on the Sabbath, the Sabbath of all Sabbaths, the Lord of Life rested in the cold stone of the sealed tomb.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Matt. 23.4.



## CHAPTER TWO

# THE AGE OF THE NEW ISRAEL

'And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun' (Mark 16.2).

IN substantially the same words, all four Evangelists tell it. Of all the circumstances of the Resurrection, this is the one detail on which all agree, that it was the First Day of the week.<sup>1</sup> They are not concerned with establishing the exact year, nor the day of the month. They do tell us that it was during the Passover, but it is not entirely clear which day it was within the course of that feast. The one definitely fixed point is the day of the week, the First Day. This was the date as officially known to the primitive Christian community: the First Day of the week, during the days of unleavened bread. Such a date was of course utterly meaningless to the Gentile world. It was significant only within the Jewish context in which the first disciples lived.

On the First Day the Lord rose. On this same day he appears to his followers, expounds to them the Scriptures, and eats and drinks with them. It is on the same day that he appears the following week. It is on the First Day that the Holy Spirit is given. The importance of the First Day does not cease with these events. We soon find the Christian community assembling on this day for preaching and the breaking of bread. On this day alms are collected. When prevented from joining with the brethren on this day, the aged seer John is admitted by the Risen Lord to witness the celestial liturgy of the Church of the first-born in the Heavenly Sion. In the subsequent chapters, we will consider all of these events in greater detail.

The Bible opens with the creative activity of God on the First Day of the Jewish week. It closes with the vision of John on the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 28.1ff; Mark 16.2, 9; Luke 24.1; John 20.1, 19.

Lord's Day<sup>1</sup> of the Christian week. By the end of the first century, the theological basis of Sunday is complete. The place of the First Day had become so firmly crystallized in Christian faith and practice that henceforth the seven-day week would be the inseparable companion of the Gospel and would ultimately overcome all the various gentile systems of dividing the month.

The New Testament nowhere contains an explicit command to worship on the First Day. In fact it is the purpose of the New Testament to get away from Judaism's legalistic approach toward worship. Yet worship on the First Day is presupposed. The permanent acceptance of Sunday as the Lord's Day must have occurred within the first generation of the Church's history, for outside the Semitic and Egyptian areas the seven-day week was not observed in this period. The Corinthians whom St Paul directs to put aside alms<sup>2</sup> on this day would presumably not have known what the First Day was unless he had taught them.

The abandonment of the observance of the Sabbath is already indicated in the so-called 'Council of Jerusalem', when Paul and Barnabas are called to account for not commanding Gentile converts to keep the law of Moses—of which, of course, the Sabbath was such a conspicuous feature. In his famous decision as president of the council, St James frees the Gentiles from all observance of the Law except

'... that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day' (Acts 15. 20, 21).

For generations to come, there would still be isolated communities of Jewish Christians who would not only observe the Lord's Day, but also the Sabbath, as well as circumcision, and other Jewish practices. But among Gentile Christians, the adoption of such Jewish observances was regarded, from the time of St Paul

<sup>1</sup> Rev. 1.10. Here we have the first appearance of the regular Greek term, *kyriake*, to which *kirk* and *church* are also related.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. 16.2.

onwards,<sup>1</sup> as a failure to understand what the Gospel meant.

### *Sunday and the Early Fathers*

Occasionally certain wayward groups did seek to introduce these Mosaic observances into the Gentile Church, and Christian leaders were prepared to battle over this issue.

During the first generation of the second century St Ignatius<sup>2</sup> speaks as Bishop of Antioch, next to Jerusalem itself the oldest Christian centre. In his *Epistle to the Magnesians*, he writes:

'For if until now we live according to Judaism, we confess that we have not received grace. For the most sacred prophets lived according to Christ Jesus. . . . If then they who walked in ancient customs came into newness of hope, no longer keeping Sabbath,<sup>3</sup> but living according to the Lord's Day (on which also our life arose through him and his death) . . . how will we be able to live without him?' (*Magnesians*, viii, ix).

Written at approximately the same time, the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas* is a direct polemic against Judaism. The Jewish observance of the seventh day is specifically attacked. Christians, looking forward to a new world, pass by the Sabbath to observe the 'Eighth Day'.

'Wherefore also we celebrate with gladness the Eighth Day, on which also Jesus rose from the dead, and having showed himself, ascended into Heaven' (*Barnabas*, xv, 9).

The 'Eighth Day' proved a term in which the Early Fathers took special delight. We may note likewise the assertion that the Ascension occurred on the same day.

In the controversy over circumcision St Paul did not treat it simply as a rite to which Baptism was an alternative. On the contrary, the two rites rest on totally different premises. Similarly in discussing the Sabbath the Fathers are not arguing whether one

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 4.9-11; Col. 2.16.

<sup>2</sup> The letters of Ignatius, and that formerly attributed to Barnabas discussed below, will be found in any edition of the so-called *Apostolic Fathers*.

<sup>3</sup> Possibly an allusion to Isa. 1.13 or Hos. 2.11.



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day of the week is better or worse than another day—after all every day belongs to Christ. Nor is it a question of which custom has greater authority. The point rather is that each observance has a totally different kind of authority, and is carried out for a different purpose and in a different manner. The Sabbath is based on the Jewish ceremonial law. To observe it is to admit the claims of that law and all that it presupposes. The Lord's Day is based instead on the fact that on this day the Lord Christ rose from the dead, bringing newness of life to all who accept his name. The one rests on legalism, justification by works, salvation by the performance of ceremonial. The other rests on faith in the truth of the Gospel, and the experience of the new life communicated to those who do believe that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. In short it is that distinction between Law and Faith which is so fundamental to Christianity. By observing Sunday and disregarding Saturday, the Christian was confessing his faith in the Gospel, he was declaring the very nature of his religion.

In the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr specifically relates the observance of Sunday to the repudiation of circumcision. In his debate with Trypho the Jew, he declares:

‘That commandment of circumcision, moreover, commanding that every one circumcise their children on the eighth day, is a type of the true circumcision, in which we are circumcised from error and evil by Jesus Christ our Lord rising from the dead on the First Day of the week;<sup>1</sup> for the First Day . . . is called the Eighth’ (*Dialogue*, xli).

Justin elsewhere gives us the clearest description we have of Sunday in early Christian times.

‘On the Sun's Day, moreover, we all make our assembly in common. For it is the First Day, on which God, changing the darkness and the matter, made the world; and on the same day Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead . . .’ (*I Apology*, lxvii).

It is interesting to note that he is one of the first writers to call the

<sup>1</sup> Justin's argument is based on Col. 2.11ff.

days by the pagan names which they still have. It is in this period that Romans were beginning to use the seven-day week, having been introduced to it, it is said, by Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

We shall later examine Justin's account of how Sunday was observed. It is enough here to summarize it. Christians assemble together, hear the Scriptures expounded, pray, celebrate the Eucharist, collect alms for the poor. In short, Christians were observing the Lord's Day in precisely those ways which we saw in the New Testament itself. We have in Justin an explicit statement of what remains down to the present as the classic view of Sunday.

### *Sunday in Later Christian History*

The Bible itself provides the foundation for the tradition of Sunday. Within the Apostolic Age that tradition was handed on to the Gentile Church. The earlier Fathers show us how the latter understood and practised the tradition so received. We have accordingly covered the period which will provide the foundation for the remainder of this study. It will be useful for us, however, briefly to survey the understanding of Sunday in later periods of Christian history, for these later views strongly colour the attitudes of modern people, even if they are not practising churchgoers.

During the pre-Nicene age, Sunday worship seems normally to have occurred early in the morning. In part this commemorated the hour of the Resurrection;<sup>2</sup> in part it reflected the fact that Christians, like everyone else, had to go to work on this day. By the end of the second century, Tertullian speaks of what was already a recognized rule: Christians were not to kneel for prayer on Sunday.<sup>3</sup> On this day, as on the fifty festal days from Easter to Whitsunday, all were to pray standing up.<sup>4</sup> For centuries this was

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Hessey, *Sunday* (Bampton Lectures, 1860) 4th edit., New York, 1880, p. 43. We are indebted to this detailed study for much historical information. It will henceforth be cited as Hessey.

<sup>2</sup> Cyprian, *To Caecilius*, Epist. LXII, xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Tertullian, *The Chaplet (de corona)* iii.

<sup>4</sup> So, too, in the one fragment reputed to survive from Irenaeus' treatise, *On Easter*.

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to remain the norm. Indeed it is not clear by what authority so ancient a rule was ever abrogated. It was everywhere expected that all Christians in good standing would fully participate in the Eucharist every Sunday. In the same period we discover that the Christian week is being more completely articulated by the increasing observance of Wednesday and Friday as fast days or 'Stations.'<sup>1</sup> This development was presumably suggested by the Jewish practice of fasting twice every week.

The third century saw widespread secular use of the hebdomadal week. That Christians were not alone in honouring the First Day is indicated by its pagan dedication to the greatest of the heavenly bodies. Mithraism and certain other cults regarded it as holy. In AD 321 the Emperor Constantine proclaimed it a public holiday.<sup>2</sup> There was now the opportunity for the unhurried and fully public performance of the Liturgy. Few other holy days were observed by Christians, and week-day worship in most places retained a private character. Hence the magnificent liturgical developments of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries give most eloquent expression to the message of the Lord's Day. The spirit of this period is still strongly felt in the worship of Eastern Christendom.

When the Church ceased to be in active competition with the Synagogue, the old Christian animus against the Sabbath largely disappeared. In fourth century Egypt, Christians regarded Saturday as a secondary festal day, and it ultimately acquired a certain recognized place in the Eastern Christian liturgical week. Some may see here a surrender to the old judaizing trend.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the distinct commemoration of the Sabbath has protected the Eastern Church from confusing the Sabbath with the First Day.

It is said that the ancient Fathers nowhere cite the Fourth

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *On Fasting*, xiv; *Didache*, viii.

<sup>2</sup> Text of proclamation in Hessey, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> So, for instance, a very useful recent work, A. A. McArthur, *The Evolution of the Christian Year*, SCM Press, 1953, pp. 24-8.



Commandment as an authority for observing Sunday.<sup>1</sup> In the Western middle ages, however, the problem of instructing vast numbers of illiterate people had led to an increasing reliance on simple but authoritative catechetical formulae. The Decalogue thus came to be strongly emphasized.<sup>2</sup> It has retained a conspicuous place in the catechesis of nearly all Western Christian bodies. There were the most obvious pastoral reasons for then utilizing Commandment Four as the divine sanction for keeping a devout Sunday.

This was but part of a larger development. Modern Christians are accustomed to ridicule the typological and allegorical interpretations of the Bible by the Fathers. Yet let it be recalled that when this ancient and deeply Christian tradition of biblical exegesis waned, there began the mediaeval literal use of the Old Testament. Canons came to be directly based on the Hebrew ceremonial code. Sabbath regulations were increasingly applied to Sunday. The performance of unnecessary work on Sunday came to be viewed as a sin in the same way, and for the same reasons, as Sabbath-breaking within Jewry.<sup>3</sup> Here we see the Church definitely losing sight of the principles for which Paul, Ignatius, and Justin had contended. While Sunday was being legalized, it was also losing its uniqueness. Saints' days and other feasts were steadily multiplied, and ordinary week-day worship was elaborate too. The Lord's Day was in jeopardy, but of course it never entirely lost its character. For most mediaeval people it was both a holy and a happy day. Sunday worship was a colourful and deeply moving experience, and the rest of the day was gladly spent eating, drinking, and pursuing such recreations as the life of the time afforded.

Other currents were also becoming felt. Although the High Mass was a glorious and joyful thing, at its heart stood the

<sup>1</sup> Hessey, pp. 85-6.

<sup>2</sup> For interesting examples of the mediaeval view, see E. L. Cutts, *Parish Priests and their People*, SPCK, 1898, pp. 216-23. This includes Archbishop Peckham's famous Constitutions of 1281.

<sup>3</sup> Hessey, pp. 88ff.

re-enactment of the death of our Saviour. The reading of the Scriptures was no longer understood; in many places the Gospel was rarely preached. Except at Easter few ever dared receive Holy Communion. Sunday worship now tended to centre on one thing, the most holy Passion of the Lord Jesus.<sup>1</sup> For those who took their religion seriously, Sunday was being turned into Friday.

Then the Reformation burst forth. Contrary to common opinion the chief Reformers did not hold a particularly high or strict view of the Lord's Day.<sup>2</sup> Indeed they generally protested against the legalistic regulations of the late mediaeval period. By curtailing feasts and simplifying week-day worship they made Sunday more distinctive, but they gave little attention to the positive significance of the day. Renaissance secularism meanwhile undermined the spirit of the Lord's Day in Roman Catholic countries. Both Protestant and Catholic leaders of course sought to maintain the position of weekly worship as a necessity in the Christian life, but a weak view of the Lord's Day has nevertheless remained typical of Continental Christianity in the West.

As is well known it is in the British Isles that we find more positive attitudes towards Sunday in the post-mediaeval era. The Elizabethan Sunday was apparently as secular as the French, and reaction to it was of course led by the Puritans. On the one hand they sought a more sombre and earnest religion. On the other hand, in their controversies with the Established Church, they had been led to maintain that the Bible prescribed everything necessary for the Christian life. The next step was obviously the assertion that the biblical Sabbath regulations were to apply to the Lord's Day. Here, they believed, was the unassailable defence of the godly Sunday. At the Synod of Dort they communicated their conviction to some of the Continental Reformed groups.<sup>3</sup> It is plain enough that Puritan sabbatarianism was in many ways a direct survival of late mediaeval piety. The same thing is evident

<sup>1</sup> For a striking sample of mediaeval eucharistic devotion, see G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London, 1945, pp. 605ff.

<sup>2</sup> Hessey, pp. 165ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 174-5.



in Puritan eucharistic worship—infrequency of Communion, deep penitence, and concentration on the outpouring of the Lord's precious Blood.<sup>1</sup>

Anglicans were not slow to defend their right to a happy and recreational Sunday. James I's *Book of Sports* (1618) presented the conflict in the starkest terms.<sup>2</sup> The Church of England stood for a cheerful Sunday, and this was to be expressed after church in out-of-doors games and other amusements. These would in fact be secular entertainments, but the sanction for them was ultimately religious—the essentially festive character of the Lord's Day. At its worst the Puritan-Anglican controversy was a conflict between Manicheism and Pelagianism. At its best this was a serious debate over a serious aspect of Christian life. What is the place of joy in the Christian life; what kind of joy is it to be? Is it a world-denying, spiritual joy; or is it a joy that gladly expresses itself in natural human terms?

Scotland committed itself firmly to the Puritan tradition, as did much of Ireland. England as usual attempted to discern some truth on both sides. The secular currents from the seventeenth century onward have made themselves felt, but the Evangelical Movement in the eighteenth century and Victorianism in the nineteenth strengthened the earnest view of the Lord's Day. In spite of recent liberalizing trends, the British Sunday remains far sterner than that of most countries.

The American Sunday is quite naturally the off-shoot of the British. Puritan New England had what was probably the strictest sabbatarianism in Christian history. The modern New Englander, whether he be descended from Yankee Congregationalists or from Irish Catholic immigrants, still prefers a rather quiet and decorous Sunday. In New York, Philadelphia and the South, Anglicanism influenced social customs, and church-going is frequently followed

<sup>1</sup> See p. 24, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The text is given in many collections of English historical documents. Students can perhaps most quickly find the main part of it in Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, New York and London, 1947, pp. 389-92.



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by agreeable gatherings of friends and neighbours. In the more recently settled Western States, social habits are less clearly defined. Church-going among all denominations is often at an earlier hour in the morning; the remainder of the day is spent far less formally than in the Eastern States.

Thus we see that the Christian view of Sunday has undergone many variations. Every age has had its characteristic attitude and this is often a very revealing indication of the spiritual temper of the times. In most periods of history men's lives have been dominated by material and economic pressures for six days of the week. Sunday has been the free day, the day that can be quite directly shaped by the community's beliefs, aspirations, and ideals. During most periods of history there has been no such field of literature as 'Christian sociology'. It has been largely in the regulation of Sunday that Christians of various ages and various nations have shown what they believed to be the good life and the holy life for the Church here on earth.

## CHAPTER THREE

# THE DAY OF LIGHT

'For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (II Cor. 4.6).

WE must now begin our more systematic analysis of the meanings and associations Sunday drew from Scripture. These ideas may be conveniently divided under three heads, characterized respectively by Light, the Resurrection, and the Spirit. The distinction between these headings is not to be exaggerated, but they will provide a helpful framework for our discussion, and these three aspects of the meaning of Sunday do in fact point to the primary doctrines of Christianity.

### *Light in the Old Testament*

The opening verses of Genesis, which we considered in Chapter One, impress upon the imagination a deep association of God with light. Pure light, independent of the sun, moon, or stars, appears there as the type of God's creative activity. Lofty as it is, this view is not characteristic of the Old Testament as a whole. We must recall that our Creation Story, as regards its actual time of writing, is one of the latest portions of the Hebrew Scripture. The actual creation of light is rarely mentioned elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

In the more ancient portions of the Old Testament light is sometimes associated with Jahweh's presence,<sup>2</sup> but fire, clouds, darkness, and thunder are the more usual tokens. Later portions show a somewhat greater use of light imagery. In Job it appears regularly as a symbol of life.<sup>3</sup> Many familiar Psalms use light to express the loving guidance which God gives to the righteous

<sup>1</sup> As in Isa. 45.7; Ps. 74.16 (verse 17 in *Book of Common Prayer*).

<sup>2</sup> But usually in connection with fire, e.g. Ezek. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Job 3.16, 20; 17.12; 18.18; etc.



individual.<sup>1</sup> References to light are scattered through Isaiah, and here we find a distinctive prophetic use of the term. It is regularly associated with the glory of God as it is to appear again in Israel, and as it is to draw all nations to their Creator.<sup>2</sup>

'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined' (Isa. 9.2).

'I the Lord . . . give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house' (Isa. 42.6, 7).

'And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising' (Isa. 60.3).

### *Light in the New Testament*

When we turn to the New Testament we are suddenly confronted everywhere by the symbol of light. To some extent this is a development from the later parts of the Old Testament; to some extent it reflects new insights which post-exilic Judaism had gained from contacts with other peoples; to some extent it is the natural response of the writers to what in fact happened when the Word became flesh.

The Synoptic Gospels see Christ as the fulfilment of the prophecies of Isaiah, and they make direct use of such passages as those we have quoted. In Matthew the Star draws the Gentile wisemen to Bethlehem.<sup>3</sup> In Luke, Zacharias sings of the day-spring visiting us:

To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. . . . ' (Luke 1.79).

Simeon praises God for

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 27.1; 36.9; 43.3; etc.

<sup>2</sup> See also Isa. 2.5; 49.6; 60.1. In ancient religions, the imagery of creation stories was regularly used for symbols of supernatural victory in the present or future; see S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, Oxford, 1956, pp. 80ff.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 2.2, 9, 10.

## THE DAY OF LIGHT

'A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel' (Luke 2.32).

Our Lord shows himself as the source of light by curing blindness; indeed this is a most familiar manifestation of his messianic power.

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor . . . and recovering of sight to the blind'<sup>1</sup> (Luke 4.18, quoting Isa. 61.1).

The conversion of St Paul brings together these same themes:

'At midday, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun . . . And he said "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister . . . delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God"' (Acts 26.13-18).

Among the Synoptic writers the culminating identification of Christ with light is of course the Transfiguration. Here the purpose and mission of Jesus is most fully unveiled. Here he was shown as the Only-begotten Son and spokesman of the Father, the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets, the new Moses, the sacrificial Victim. The symbol of all of this was the 'glory' that radiated from the Son of man.<sup>2</sup>

It is apparent that light is one of the principal religious symbols of the New Testament, but what has this to do with Sunday? The material we have considered is nowhere explicitly related to the work of the First Day by the Synoptic Evangelists. Such a relationship, however, is quite methodically undertaken by the Fourth Evangelist, for 'light' is one of the main themes of Johanne literature. Where Matthew and Luke poetically present the

<sup>1</sup> The 'opening of the prison' given in the King James' Version of Isa. 61.1, should probably be translated 'opening of the eyes'; hence the rendering in the quotation given by Luke, and in ancient translations of Isaiah.

<sup>2</sup> Students interested in this topic must consult Archbp. A. M. Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, London and New York, 1949.



Christ Child as the 'light to lighten the Gentiles', John explicitly opens with a Christian paraphrase of the first chapter of Genesis, and unequivocally states of Christ:

'That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1.9).

The reference is repeatedly renewed in the course of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> After the Feast of Tabernacles, which involved the ritual use of lamps,<sup>2</sup> Jesus says:

'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life' (John 8.12).

The healing of blindness is brought into explicit relationship with this teaching.<sup>3</sup> The blind man whose eyes are opened illustrates the transition from the falsehood, evil, and spiritual deadness of Judaism to the enlightenment, truth, and spiritual renewal of Christianity. The Jews rightly say to the cured man:

'Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples' (John 9.28).

By St Paul likewise the theme of light is brought into a clear relationship with the opening of Genesis, especially in the passage extending through the third and fourth chapters of II Corinthians. This is in so many ways a summary of the most lofty New Testament teaching that it may surprise us to recall that it was in fact written many years before the other passages to which we have alluded. Here Christ is preached as the new Moses, the Bestower of the new law of the Spirit, the Deliverer from the blindness of Judaism, the Restorer of the glory of the image of God—all of this is summed up in

. . . the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God' (II Cor. 4.4).

The last phrase here leads the Blessed Apostle into his favourite

<sup>1</sup> John 3.19; 9.5; 12.35, 46.

<sup>2</sup> For description of these remarkable rites, see R. Patai, *Man and Temple*, Nelson and Sons, 1947, pp. 27-32.

<sup>3</sup> The pool of Siloam where the cure occurs, John 9.7, also figured in the Tabernacle's rites. See Patai, as cited above.

topic of meditation, the Creation Story. The verse quoted at the head of this chapter is quite explicit in its reference to the opening of Genesis. Lest there be any doubt subsequent verses contain a series of verbal allusions to the material in the first chapters of Genesis:

'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels' (4.7).

'So then death worketh in us' (4.12).

'If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked' (5.3).

'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature' (5.17).

For Paul, as for John, light typifies the glory of the Son of God and the whole sphere of his redemptive activity. It contrasts not only with the darkness of pagan ignorance, but more particularly with the tragic recalcitrance of the children of the earthly Jerusalem. By relating the light of Christ to the First Day of Genesis, these writers express the transcendence of his eternal Person, his primacy over all the universe, and the unity of the Pentateuch with the Gospel. This unity in turn means the single consistent loving purpose of one God acting both in Creation and in Redemption. As St Irenaeus writes of the Fourth Gospel:

'Showing at the same time, that by the Word, by whom God made the creation, he also bestowed salvation on the men included in the creation, he (John) thus commenced his teaching according to the Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word . . . What was made was life in him, and the life was the light of men"' (*Against Heresies*, III, xi, 1).

The New Testament does not confine light to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. God the Father 'is light' (I John 1.5) and 'the Father of lights' (James 1.17). Less directly the Holy Ghost appears 'in cloven tongues like as of fire' (Acts 2.3) and as 'seven lamps of fire' (Rev. 4.5).<sup>1</sup> The imagery of light thus

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rev. 1.4; 3.1. The Holy Ghost is evidently considered the heavenly Pattern of the great seven-fold candelabra of the earthly temple. That in turn was probably connected with ritual celebration of the creation of light. See Patai, pp. 33-4.

characterizes the unity of the Godhead, and is so used in the Nicene Creed: 'God of God, Light of Light.'

Light likewise characterizes God's people and his Church.<sup>1</sup> Christians are to be 'children of light,' and 'the light of the world'—this is our Lord's own phraseology (Matt. 5.14). Light suggests both the union which we have with God in Christ, and also our union with each other.<sup>2</sup>

In Colossians we find this light of Christ's Kingdom related to the light of Creation.

'Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us unto the kingdom of his dear Son' (Col. 1.12, 13).

A number of key words identify this passage as another Pauline meditation on the opening chapters of Genesis:

'being fruitful . . . increasing' (verse 10).

'image of the invisible God' (verse 15).

'For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth' (verse 16).

'the beginning' (verse 18).

### *Summary*

We may now conclude our consideration of this theme. In the Old Testament we found light to express life, the loving guidance of God, and the glory which was to be in Israel and which would draw all nations. The opening of Genesis identifies light with the First Day of the Jewish week and makes it typify God's creative activity.

In the New Testament, light is a primary symbol of God and especially the glory of his love as revealed in Jesus Christ. From the incarnate Lord it flows out to illuminate the people of his Kingdom. This light of Christ is identified with the light of the

<sup>1</sup> John 12.36; Eph. 5.8; I Thess. 5.5; cf. Luke 16.8.

<sup>2</sup> I John 1.7; 2.8-10.



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First Day of Genesis in order to establish the cosmic primacy of his dominion, and to show his people as heirs of the universe.

The New Testament nowhere discusses light as bearing explicitly on the conception of the Christian Lord's Day. Yet it provides a vocabulary of light which, as we shall see, would soon greatly enrich the understanding both of the day and of the Christian sacraments normally performed on this day. By claiming the First Day as their own Christians declare themselves as children of the Father of lights and fellow-heirs with Jesus Christ, a people whom he has delivered from the darkness of sin, falsehood, and death. Forsaking the ignorance of the Gentiles and the blindness of the earthly Israel, they have entered that new Kingdom resting on everlasting foundations which is ruled by the new law of the Spirit of Life and into which Christ seeks to draw all men.

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light,<sup>1</sup> now in the time of this mortal life in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility, that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever (*Book of Common Prayer*, Advent Collect).

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 13.11-12; cf. Eph. 6.13-17; I Thess. 5.5-8.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE DAY OF RESURRECTION

‘Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, “Peace be unto you”’ (John 20.19).

WE have seen that Sunday, as the Day of Light, is a highly meaningful symbol of the fundamental realities of the Christian Gospel, and we have discovered this to be true without touching directly on the fact of the Lord’s Resurrection on this day. In terms of abstract doctrine, Christ was the Light of the world before he became the Resurrection of the dead—indeed, as Paul and John would have us recall, he was Light before the universe ever existed. Yet in terms of human historical experience the Resurrection was primary. It was that event which most fully declared to men

‘the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began’ (Rom. 16.25).

#### *The Easter Narrative and Subsequent Sundays*

As we have seen in Chapter II, all four Evangelists treat the First Day as the most definite factor in the date of the Lord’s rising from the tomb. There is no doubt that this emphasis on the First Day goes back to the earliest stage of the Church’s life. Just what were the events so commemorated?

Very early in the morning, Mary Magdalene, apparently with one or more of the other women, visits the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body, and she sees the Risen Lord and/or receives an angelic assurance of the Resurrection.<sup>1</sup> Peter next comes to the tomb, and perhaps sees him at this time.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 28.1-10; Mark 16.1-9; Luke 24.1-10; John 20.1, 11-17.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 24.12, 34; John 20.3-10; I Cor. 15.5.

Later Christ appears to two disciples on the way to Emmaus.<sup>1</sup> According to Luke, he expounds to them the 'things concerning himself' in the Old Testament and then manifests his identity in the breaking of bread.

Toward the end of the day, when the unbelieving Eleven are gathered for their dinner, Jesus astonishes them by appearing in their midst and by showing the scars of his Passion.<sup>2</sup> Then, and apparently at one or more other times, he actually eats and drinks with them.<sup>3</sup> Luke records that Christ again unlocked the mysteries of the Scriptures, showing in them the testimony to himself.<sup>4</sup> As Saviour and Lord, he commissions the apostles as his witnesses.<sup>5</sup> John has a similar appearance the following Sunday.<sup>6</sup>

The actual time of the Ascension is not clearly defined. Some early Christians seem to have believed that the commissioning of the Eleven on Easter was followed by an immediate entrance into the Heavens. Mark may be read in such a sense.<sup>7</sup> Others remembered that the Risen Lord and the disciples met later in Galilee, as in Matthew and John.<sup>8</sup> Although his Gospel is indecisive, Luke affirms in Acts that the Ascension was a visible event that took place near Jerusalem forty days later, hence, presumably on a Thursday.<sup>9</sup> Early Christians, however, had little interest in the precise chronology of Luke. The Resurrection and Ascension were intimately associated, and the latter as well as the former was widely regarded as an event to be commemorated on the First Day of the week.<sup>10</sup>

In the Resurrection appearances we may see several specific things done. First the Lord Jesus proves that he is indeed alive.

<sup>1</sup> Mark 16.12; Luke 24.13-33.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 16.14; Luke 24.36-40; John 20.19-20; presumably I Cor. 15.5. This would have been the dinner in the late afternoon which was the principal meal of the day.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 24.41-3; Acts 10.41; perhaps John 21.10-13.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 24.44-7.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 24.48-9; John 20.21-3; Acts 10.42; perhaps Mark 16.15-18.

<sup>6</sup> John 20.26-9. <sup>7</sup> Mark 16.14-19.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. 28.7, 16-20; John 21.1-22. <sup>9</sup> Acts 1.3-11; cf. Luke 24.50-1.

<sup>10</sup> See reference to *Epistle of Barnabas* on p. 19 above, and discussion of Whitsunday in next chapter.



## THE DAY OF LIGHT

Secondly he expounds the Gospel from the Scriptures. Thirdly he reveals his presence to his assembled followers particularly at meals. Fourthly, on the basis of his divine lordship, he confers on his apostles the supernatural power to proclaim everywhere his messianic kingdom and to baptize and minister the forgiveness of sins.

The Synoptic Gospels record the one Easter Sunday and no more. John carries us on to the following Sunday which is so similar. Acts has the account of Pentecost which, as we shall see in the next chapter, is quite likely to have fallen on the First Day. Beyond these, however, the New Testament has only three explicit references to Sundays.

In Acts we have the record of St Paul's Sunday at Troas.<sup>1</sup> It is a unique scene, vividly recalled by the writer—the lengthy preaching, the many lights in the upper room, sleepy-headed Eutychus falling from the window but dramatically declared to be alive by the apostle. 'The disciples came together to break bread', and we must assume that they deliberately chose to do so on the First Day since Paul was with them for a week. The whole episode is at night, evidently the night which began the First Day in Jewish reckoning. One recalls our Lord's injunction:

'Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord' (Luke 12.35, 36).

Our second later reference is in the writings of St Paul:

'Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come' (I Cor. 16.1, 2).

Here we may note that this is referred to as a practice of Gentile churches, although these people were unlikely to have had much secular knowledge of the hebdomadal week. Though the apostle's direction appears to refer to a private, individual setting apart

<sup>1</sup> Acts 20.6-11.

## THE DAY OF RESURRECTION

from money, the final phrase indicates that it is not. This must be a corporate collection, since its purpose is to preclude any such collections at a later date. We may note too that this donation is for the 'poor saints' of the Mother Church at Jerusalem. The collection is not only an act of charity but also a witness to the unity of Jew and Gentile as one 'new man' in Christ.

In the final book of the Bible John's vision occurs 'on the Lord's Day'.<sup>1</sup> He is visited by the glorified Christ; he is given prophetic messages to the churches; he is admitted to witness the liturgy of the angels and resurrected saints in Heaven; and he is shown the destruction of earthly powers and the inauguration of the new creation. As in the accounts of the Resurrection, so here the day is significant. The seer tells us nothing of the year or the month, but he seems to assume that it will increase the authority of his vision to record that it did occur on what his readers recognize as the Lord's Day.

The apostolic age has left us a very scanty record of how it observed the Lord's Day. Yet that record conforms closely to the pattern of the first Easter: the unity of the disciples, the delivery of the Word of God, the breaking of bread, and the manifestation of the presence and power of the Risen Lord.

### *Special Aspects of the Resurrection*

There are several ideas here that are very relevant to our present enquiry. First we may notice the close relation of the Resurrection to the symbolism of light that we previously considered. The light of the Resurrection stands in contrast to the darkness of sin, ignorance, sleep, and death, as the incident of Eutychus may suggest.

'And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. . . . Wherefore he saith "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light"' (Eph. 5.11, 14).

Secondly, it is the Resurrection which unlocks the true meaning

<sup>1</sup> Rev. 1.10.

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of the Hebrew Scriptures. Christ's whole ministry does so in a sense, but above all the Crucifixion, Burial, and Resurrection reveal the purpose and intention of the Old Testament in a way previously undreamed of. St Luke twice tells us of the Risen Lord expounding the Scriptures with reference to his Death and Resurrection. Here we see Jesus apparently doing what St Paul speaks of in II Corinthians, interpreting according to the Spirit, and removing that veil which had remained over Moses.<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, the Resurrection is the inauguration of the new creation. The Lord Jesus did not merely become alive again; rather he entered into a new life, a new realm, as Forerunner for a new race, the first-fruits of a new world. When the story of the old creation is read in the light of the Resurrection, then it becomes transformed. This is precisely what we see happening in those passages where New Testament writers meditate upon the opening of Genesis.

St John 1.1-14  
I Corinthians, 15.20-49  
II Corinthians 4-6  
Ephesians 5.22-33  
Colossians 1

We have dealt with some of these passages before, and the reader will see that we are in fact being led into a closely knit circle of ideas.<sup>2</sup> Each time we consider some part of this question, we are brought back to see new aspects of the other parts. Nor does this progressively deepening meditation end. This inexhaustible quality of the Bible is one of the signs that it is not the words of men, but rather the word of God.

'We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.'  
(T. S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*, v)

<sup>1</sup> II Cor. 3.12-18.

<sup>2</sup> A relationship between the basic themes, and their connection with cultus, may be traced back to a very ancient stage of religious history. See Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, pp. 139-43.



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Nor is it merely the Creation Narrative that is transformed. The New Israel finds its history all through the Scriptures of the Old.

'God is the Lord who hath showed us light:  
oracles of prophets  
melody of psalms  
admonition of proverbs  
experience of histories.'

(Lancelot Andrewes, *Sunday Prayers*)

Just as the weekly Sabbath evokes for the Jew the memory of the whole of the Old Covenant, so the Lord's Day stands to the Christian as a sign pointing to the Risen Jesus, who reveals to us in the whole Scripture the things concerning himself.

### *The Eighth Day*

Easter was the beginning of a new era. Christ our Head is entered into the heavenly places, and our citizenship is there. Yet we are still in our earthly pilgrimage. We are still pressing on

'... toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus' (Phil. 3.14).

The actual rising, which is in the past for him, still lies ahead for us. To reach his First Day, we must yet die on Friday and sleep the Sabbath out. So for us the Resurrection Day will come Eighth. In Sunday stands the assurance not only of the victory Christ has accomplished on the Cross, but the promise of that victory he wills to accomplish in all our crosses in the future.

'Quick now, here, now, always—  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)  
And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one.'  
(T. S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*, v, with quotation from Dame Julian of Norwich)

## CHAPTER FIVE

# THE DAY OF THE SPIRIT

'And the Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters'  
(Gen. 1.2).

WE now come to our third and final heading for the biblical significance of the Lord's Day. As we now consider this day in relation to the Holy Ghost, we discern how clearly its meaning corresponds to the principal affirmations of the Creed. We shall first briefly deal with the Old Testament teaching, and then consider the Messianic bestowal of the Spirit in the New Testament. Lastly we shall see how in the gift of the Spirit the revelation of the Holy Trinity is fulfilled.

### *The Spirit and the Old Creation*

Throughout the Old Testament there are many references to the Spirit of the Lord. Most of these relate to the descent of divine power upon some hero or prophet. Such passages are by no means without relevance to our theme, but we shall here concern ourselves mainly with the one familiar passage at the beginning of Genesis. Presenting the Spirit as the partner in creation, this unique passage implies what is probably the highest doctrine of the Spirit in the Hebrew Scriptures. Associating the Spirit with the inauguration of the First Day, it is of the most direct pertinence to our present inquiry.

But what does this passage actually mean? There is no simple answer; it must be seen against the mysterious and pregnant background which we attempted to suggest in Chapter One. In Hebrew as in some other tongues, the word for 'spirit' (*ruach*) is in fact the word 'wind'. The phrase 'Spirit of God' carries the imagery of a mighty wind. This in turn fits into the general metaphorical framework of the Creation Story. Taking creation

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as the opening of the cosmic day, the Spirit is the breath of the universal dawn.

‘Out at sea the dawn wind  
Wrinkles and slides. I am here  
Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning.’  
(T. S. Eliot, *East Coker*, i)

Taking creation as the opening of the first new year, the Spirit is the spring wind, clearing off the clouds and blowing back the flood-waters in a primeval fluvial valley.<sup>1</sup> As such it prefigures the wind in two great renewals of creation.

‘And God remembered Noah . . . and God made a wind to pass over the earth and the water assuaged’ (Gen. 8.1).

‘And the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground’ (Ex. 14.21, 22).

The verb in Genesis indicating the movement of the Spirit over the waters is the term for a bird brooding eggs. It is generally taken to be a reminiscence of a more primitive Semitic myth in which a divine bird hatched the world from a vast egg.<sup>2</sup> The suggestion of a bird will again lead the Christian reader to recall Noah’s dove, as in the Baptism of our Blessed Lord the Holy Ghost appeared as a dove. Elsewhere in the New Testament the Sacrament of Baptism is closely related to the Flood and to the Exodus.<sup>3</sup> Thus we find that the mysterious rôle of the Holy Ghost at the inauguration of creation prefigures divine action in other biblical events of major importance.

### *The Spirit and the New Creation*

The main New Testament event concerning the Holy Ghost is of course his descent on the Church at Pentecost. In the

<sup>1</sup> Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18, 49-50. It is not, however, necessary to establish (as Skinner seeks to) that the Spirit appeared *either* as a bird *or* as a wind. The poetic effect of the Creation Story is achieved by the assembling of a great many different images.

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. 10.1-2; I Peter 3.18-21.



Christian liturgical tradition, this comes fifty days after Easter and hence must fall on the Seventh Sunday after the Day of the Resurrection. As one of the two greatest Sundays of the year, it is of major concern to our present study.

Yet the question remains as to whether that original Whitsunday really did fall on the Lord's Day or not. The ancient prescriptions of the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus clearly expect that Pentecost should fall on the First Day.<sup>1</sup> It was reckoned as follows. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (the Passover) lasted a week; within that week, 'on the morrow after the sabbath' there is offered a new sheaf of the harvest. Then 'seven sabbaths shall be complete' and on the next day there are offered two loaves of new meal, 'the first fruits unto the Lord'. It will be noted that there are fifty days from the sheaf offering until the bread offering, hence the Greek word Pentecost. These days form as it were a 'week of weeks', hence the Jewish expression, Feast of Weeks.

Since Christ definitely rose on the First Day within the Days of Unleavened Bread, Christians are following Leviticus when they observe Whitsunday fifty days after Easter. The offering of first fruits, furthermore, comes to be reflected in New Testament terminology both as a title of Christ, 'the first fruits of them that slept',<sup>2</sup> and of Christian people, 'a kind of first fruits of his creatures'.<sup>3</sup> Later Judaism interpreted Pentecost as the feast of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.<sup>4</sup> If this interpretation was already current in the first century, it may have influenced Paul's contrast of the Law and the Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

These considerations all provide rich associations for the Christian Whitsunday, but do not actually answer the historical question. For although Leviticus appears to be clear, the Pharisees seem to have interpreted it differently. They regarded the first

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 23.15-16. Ex. 34.22 gives no specific details, and Deut. 16.9-10 apparently reflects an era when the date was not so rigidly fixed.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. 15.20, 23.

<sup>3</sup> James 1.18; Rev. 14.4.

<sup>4</sup> See proper clause for Pentecost in Kiddush for Festivals.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 8.2, 15, 23 (note reference to firstfruits); Gal. 4.4-6, 24-6 (note reference to Sinai). II Cor. 3 is directly based on Ex. 34.

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'sabbath' referred to as the first day of Unleavened Bread, for it was a day of rest no matter on what day of the week it might occur from year to year. The pharisaic reckoning seems to have been influential in the first century.<sup>1</sup> Now according to the Synoptic account, the first day of unleavened bread was what we would call Thursday Night and Friday of the week of the Passion. If this is correct, and if the pharisaic computation of Pentecost was then in force, the sheaf offering would have been on Saturday, as would Pentecost seven weeks later. According to John, on the other hand, the unleavened bread began that year on what we call Friday Night and Saturday. Hence the sheaf would have been offered on the First Day, Sunday, irrespective of whether the pharisaic interpretation of Leviticus was followed or not. Pentecost thus would also have been on Sunday. In short, according to the Synoptic Gospels, Pentecost could have been either on Saturday or on Sunday. According to John's chronology, it had to be Sunday. Logical probability thus favours the date which Christians have in fact observed since time immemorial.

The Fourth Evangelist was perhaps aware of the ambiguity of St Luke, and he leaves no uncertainty as to the day of the week on which the Risen Jesus gives the Spirit to his Apostles. John has the Spirit given when the Lord commissions the apostles on Easter afternoon:

'The same day at evening, being the first day of the week . . .'  
(John 20.19).

Matthew and Mark do not record any specific day that the Holy Ghost is given. Either the gift itself, or the promise of it, is implied in the final charge which the ascending Lord gives to his followers.<sup>2</sup> Just as the Early Church connected the Resurrection and Ascension very closely, so they associated the Giving of the Spirit with these.

'When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men' (Eph. 4.8).

<sup>1</sup> McArthur, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 28.18-20; Mark 16.15-20.



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All of these mysteries are intimately related: Christ's victory over death, his Ascension, and the gift of the Spirit which is the proof of Christ's glory.<sup>1</sup> Because the Church is 'risen in Christ', therefore we experience a sharing in his glory. The gift of the Spirit is our foretaste of that full blessedness we shall share in Heaven.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian Church has many grounds for celebrating Sunday as the day of the Holy Ghost. First there is the opening of Genesis with its mysterious but rich associations. Secondly, the Fourth Gospel unequivocally has our Lord bestow the Holy Ghost on his apostles on this day. So much is definite. The Fourth Gospel appears to record a widespread belief in the unity of the Resurrection, Ascension, and gift of the Holy Ghost. The original Whitsunday, to which Luke assigns this gift, was very likely a Sunday. So much is probable. Finally, the powers which the Spirit bestows on the Church are in fact exhibited and set forth in a special way on Sunday. This is a fact of Christian experience.

Whitsunday, we must recall, is a meaningful feast, quite apart from St Luke's account. It is one of the Church's two oldest yearly festivals, coming directly from Judaism. As the latter has its Feast of Weeks following Passover, so Christianity fittingly has a festal season as the culmination of its liturgical year. The basis of its computation, a week squared, beginning and ending with a Sunday, all fittingly symbolizes the centrality of the First Day for the Christian Calendar. As our 'week of weeks' opens with the witness of the Saviour's Resurrection, so it appropriately closes with the witness of his new life living in the members of his Body, which is 'one loaf' in him. In point of history, the Christian observance of Pentecost appears to have begun independently of St Luke's account of it.<sup>3</sup> It is extremely interesting to note that in fourth century Jerusalem, where Whitsunday was observed with the utmost solemnity, it was apparently regarded as the feast both

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2.32-3; 5.32.      <sup>2</sup> II Cor. 1.22; 5.5; Eph. 1.13-14; I John 4.13.

<sup>3</sup> It is a striking fact that Christians unquestioningly retained Pentecost (note Acts 20.16; I Cor. 16.8) whereas other equally important Jewish feasts, Tabernacles and the Atonement, were quickly dropped without leaving any shadow on the pages of Church History.



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of the Ascension and of the gift of the Spirit.<sup>1</sup> The local tradition *in situ* was thus akin to the narrative in Acts, but by no means literally governed by it.

Having established the clear authority for the Christian observance of Pentecost irrespective of the date of the episode described by Luke, we must then come back and admit that his description remains the classic account of what the Holy Ghost actually does with the followers of Jesus Christ on his day.

'They were all with one accord in one place' (Acts 2.1), presumably the 'upper room' (Acts 1.13) where they habitually met. They were empowered to preach to men of every tongue, so that from this very day Christ's Church was 'catholic'. This is the sign of the new age, for it fulfils the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2.16, 17). The Resurrection is proclaimed (verses 24, 32) and expounded from the Old Testament (verses 25-35). The gift of the Spirit is in fact the visible proof of the truth of these things (verse 33). Repentance, Baptism, and the remission of sins are preached and in fact a vast crowd is converted and baptized (verses 38-41). Here, in the most specific way, the apostles carry out the commission which the Risen Christ had entrusted to them. The words speak for themselves if we compare the second chapter of Acts with that commission as it is given, in somewhat varying terms, in the last chapter of each of the Synoptic Gospels, or in the twentieth chapter of John.

The apostolate is here fully in action witnessing to the fact of Jesus' Resurrection, and carrying out the directions which the risen Jesus had given to them. They are now able to expound the Scripture as he himself had on Easter Day. Both the apostles and their followers share in a new power and a new life. It is bestowed on them when they are 'gathered together', and it is able to reach out and gather to their fellowship men 'out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation' (Rev. 5.9).

The gathering of the faithful, the exposition of the Scriptures, the witnessing to the Resurrection, the administering of the

<sup>1</sup> McArthur, pp. 151-5, presents a very convincing discussion.

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Sacraments—based as they are on the events of Easter Day, these become characteristic acts of the *ecclesia* on the Lord's Day down through the ages. For St Luke these cannot remain the quiet indoor activities of an obscure Jewish sect. These, rather, are the channels and expressions through which the Holy Ghost, like a veritable tornado, will revolutionize human history. For Luke the gift of the Spirit means this new life, this new power, this sharing in a new existence within the Kingdom of the victorious and glorified Jesus. The first Whitsunday sets before us those realities which must ever remain at the heart of the Christian Sunday, and which are the 'first principles'<sup>1</sup> of the life of the Church.

I believe in the Holy Ghost;  
The Holy Catholic Church;  
The Communion of Saints;  
The Forgiveness of sins;  
The Resurrection of the body;  
And the Life everlasting.

### *The Day of the Trinity*

The knowledge of the Spirit completes the revelation of the most holy Trinity. This is not a matter of numerical addition. Trefoils, triangles, and other mediaeval Western symbols often give us too arithmetic a conception of trinitarianism. It is not a question of now discerning a Third Person beside the Two which had been previously revealed. On the contrary, it is the Spirit acting within us who testifies to the Son through whom, in turn, we know the Father. No person of the Deity is rightly understood apart from the other two; each stands in a unique relation to the others. The structure of trinitarian truth only emerges with the gift of the Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

The Western feast of the Trinity is in part an off-shoot from Whitsunday, being in fact the octave-day of the latter.<sup>3</sup> It is in part a reflection of the desire to find a permanent assignment for

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Heb. 6.1-2.    <sup>2</sup> John 15.26; 16.13-15; I Cor. 12.3; I John 5.1-6.

<sup>3</sup> An embryonic Trinity Sunday appears in this character in *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, H. A. Wilson, edit., Oxford, 1894, pp. 129-30.



the Votive Mass of the Trinity which many mediaeval clergy were wont to use on any Sunday.<sup>1</sup> In the earlier mediaeval period Palm Sunday in many places had much of the significance of our Trinity Sunday. For it was then that the candidates for Easter Baptism were publicly catechized on the Creed and the trinitarian faith was explained.<sup>2</sup>

The East really has two feasts of the Trinity: First is Pentecost, which is regularly so regarded. Secondly there is that great day of Eastern popular piety, Epiphany, the feast of our Lord's Baptism. It is well to see the intimate relation between these two. At the Jordan Jesus was baptized, was declared to be the Son of God, and was seen as the Anointed of the Holy Ghost. On Pentecost the ascended Jesus pours down the same Holy Ghost on his apostles, baptizing them with his power.<sup>3</sup> They in turn baptize a multitude of converts. The liturgical commemoration of the Trinity is repeatedly linked with Holy Baptism, just as it is in regard to this sacrament that the New Testament most often expresses its trinitarian doctrine. Baptism in turn leads us back to the commission given by the Lord Jesus on the day of his Resurrection.

In the East, particularly among the Russians, those Sundays of the year which do not have a special significance of their own are to some extent assimilated to Easter. In the West, 'ordinary Sundays' have tended to take the feast of the Trinity as their

<sup>1</sup> Until the later middle ages, clergy commonly recited votive masses if they were not celebrating solemnly. Some of these votives originally bore considerable relation to the biblical significance of the day: the Holy Trinity was commemorated on Sunday; the Angels perhaps originally on Monday (when heaven was made, Gen. 1.6-8); the Cross on Friday. The ultimate prohibition of votives on Sunday pushed the Mass of the Trinity back to Monday, where a form of this mass will still be found in Roman and Anglo-Catholic missals. Meanwhile the rationale of the Christian week was becoming increasingly obscure in the West. For the Mass of the Trinity (attributed to Alcuin) see Gerald Ellard, *Master Alcuin, Liturgist*, Chicago, 1956, pp. 157-61.

<sup>2</sup> For a survey of the Gallican, Mozarabic, and North Italian sources, see H. B. Porter, *Maxentius of Aquileia and the North Italian Baptismal Rites, Ephemerides liturgicae* lxi, 1955, pp. 3-9, espec. Appendix.

<sup>3</sup> A magisterial exposition of this theme is given in Lancelot Andrewes, Whitsunday Sermon VIII (AD 1615); vol. III of his *Works*, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, 1841, pp. 241ff.



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prototype. Each system has merit, and each would remind us that there really is no such thing as an 'ordinary Sunday'. Every Lord's Day is the proclamation of those ever-new truths which stand at the heart of the Christian Faith.

We have seen the true Light;  
we have received the Holy Spirit;  
we have found the true Faith.  
Wherefore let us worship the indivisible Trinity;  
For He hath saved us.  
(Orthodox Vespers, Pentecost Eve)

## CHAPTER SIX

# SUNDAY WORSHIP

'Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ' (I Peter 2.5).

As we have seen, the keeping of the Lord's Day is linked with the holding of the principal truths of the Christian Faith. Indeed, Sunday symbolizes the very nature of that faith which makes Christian truths so different from the tenets of other religions. Those events which led to the observance of the Lord's Day—the Resurrection and the gift of the Spirit—themselves established a certain pattern for carrying out that observance. From apostolic times we have the assembling of the Church, the reading and expounding of the Bible, the administration of sacraments, and the fellowship which includes a sharing with the poor. We have now to examine these actions more closely, and see what meaning early Christians found in each of them. First we will consider the normal order of public worship always associated with Sunday in the ancient Church. In the following chapters we will consider Holy Baptism and certain other rites normally performed on this day.

### *Justin Martyr's Sunday*

The oldest systematic description of Sunday worship is given to us by Justin Martyr, writing in Rome in the middle of the second century. It occurs in his *First Apology*. This book, like others of similar title, was intended to dissuade the Roman government from persecuting Christians. The description of worship must be interpreted accordingly. Justin is not attempting to be liturgically precise; he is primarily attempting to assure pagans that the Christians who eat Jesus are not really guilty of cannibalism or any other vice, but are only engaged in innocent

and quiet ceremonies. He naturally avoids using too many technical or esoteric words, and he does not call attention to the effective organization and strict discipline which the Church already possessed. For instance, the term 'bishop' is nowhere used, and he omits all reference to the board of presbyters who in fact must have been a conspicuous group at all church meetings.

'And on what is called Sunday there is an assembly in one place of all who live either in the cities or in the country, and the accounts of the apostles or the scriptures of the prophets are read as long as time allows. Then when the reader has finished, the president admonishes and summons by word to the imitation of these good things. Then we all stand up together and pray. And, as we said before, when we stop our prayers, bread is brought and wine and water, and the president in the same way offers up prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people assent saying *Amen*. And the distribution and partaking of those things thanked over (i.e., the consecrated bread and wine) is given to each, and to the absent it is sent by the deacons (lit. "servers"). Those who are well off, moreover, and who wish to, each according to his choice, gives what he wishes, and what is collected is deposited with the president, and he succours orphans and widows, and those who are in want through sickness or other necessity, and those in prison, and the sojourning foreigners; in short he is a helper of all in need. On Sunday, moreover, we all make our assembly in common. For it is the First Day, on which God changing darkness and the matter made the world; and on the same day Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead. For they crucified him on the Day before Saturn's day, and on the day after Saturn's day, that is the Sun's day, appearing to his apostles and disciples, he taught these things which we also have submitted to you for consideration' (*I Apol.*, lxvii).

This description of the regular Sunday service is made even clearer by referring to a previous description of the Eucharist following a Baptism.

'And we offer common prayers earnestly, both for ourselves and for the baptized and for all others everywhere. . . . Ending the prayers we embrace each other with a kiss. Then there is brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of water and wine



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and he taking them, offers up praise and glory to the Father of all things through the Name of his Son and of the Holy Spirit, and he makes thanksgiving at length for our being counted worthy of these things by him. When he has finished the prayers and thanksgiving, all the people present express assent, saying *Amen*. This *Amen* in the Hebrew tongue means *so be it . . .* (*I Apol.*, lxv).

These passages are extraordinarily interesting. They do not present us with any new activities, however. The assembling of the faithful, the reading and expounding of the Bible, the breaking of Bread, and the sharing with the poor—those go back to the New Testament Lord's Day and to the words and deeds of the risen Lord himself. What is new is that here these activities have emerged as a clear pattern of churchly procedure followed every Sunday. All of these things, furthermore, have an integral relationship with each other and—what concerns us here—with the theological significance of the Lord's Day. Justin clearly understands this, and he feels it necessary to explain the meaning of the day in order that his readers may understand the rationale of Christian worship.

First of all, Justin has followed Genesis in alluding to the creation of light and the beginning of the world on this day. The biblical implications of this allusion are quite definite, for in the preceding chapters quotations from the first three verses of Genesis appear no less than three times.<sup>1</sup> It is of course also the day of the Resurrection. Justin evidences less awareness of Pentecost, but previous chapters have shown him quite mindful of the place of the Holy Spirit on the First Day of Creation. Sunday is thus bound up with the fundamental truths of Christianity, and it is these very truths which are celebrated in the worship and sacraments of the Christian *ecclesia*.

Modern Christians are well accustomed to the idea of having special or 'proper' forms of worship assigned to special days—palm processions on Palm Sunday, the preaching of the Cross on

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., lix, lx, lxiv.

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Good Friday, the litany on Rogation Days, and so on. For Justin, there is one special day each week, Sunday, and the special form of worship designed to exemplify the meaning of this day is the Holy Eucharist—a comprehensive liturgical rite in which the fulness of the Gospel is experienced each week as a living and immediate reality. Here are the Scriptures in which the Holy Ghost foretold the things concerning Jesus. Here the priestly people of the New Covenant intercede for all mankind. Here the Family of God greet each other with a holy kiss and assemble as brethren and fellow-heirs with Christ around his table. As members one of another, all partake of one Bread and one Cup, and if sickness or imprisonment has kept any away, the sacramental food is immediately taken to them. Earthly food too is carried forth to orphans and widows in the name of that God who is a Father and Husband to his people. In short, all of this is nothing less than *the actual experience of what Christianity is*. Christians of later ages have sought abstract definitions of such things as grace, the notes of the Church, and the content of the sacraments, but for early Christians these were things

‘which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life’ (I John 1.1).

The service Justin describes is not, as some have supposed, a simple or informal prayer-meeting. It is a solemn, lengthy, and elaborate rite, involving a number of different persons and actions. Yet even in this rough and ready description, we can discern a remarkable unity of conception. There is the parallelism of the intercessory prayers, the alms, and the taking of the sacrament to the sick and imprisoned. There is the relation between the kiss and the Communion. There is the consistency of the bishop’s rôle as dispenser of Word, sacraments, and alms. All finds its ultimate unity in the Lord of the Resurrection, who,

‘on the day after Saturn’s day, that is the Sun’s day, appearing to his apostles and disciples, taught these things’ (I Apol., lxxvii).

The distinctive act of the Sunday liturgy, which has given its



name to the whole service, is the bishop's great prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God, the 'Eucharist'. This, as is quite clear from Justin's description, is the solemn priestly prayer called the anaphora, or canon, or prayer of consecration in later liturgies. If we would understand Justin's liturgy, we must first see the significance of this central and climactic prayer.

As is well known to students of liturgy, the Jews regard food or other objects as being blessed when God is blessed for bestowing them. A Jewish grace at meal-times may be referred to as either a blessing or a thanksgiving—the New Testament uses the two terms interchangeably in this context. In ancient times, as still today, a devout Jew begins his dinner by taking bread and blessing God the King of the universe for granting bread from the earth. After dinner there is a much longer and more solemn grace, thanking God both for sustenance and for his many blessings to Israel. On formal occasions this is recited over a 'cup of blessing'. Wine is provided earlier for refreshment and pleasure; this final cup is blessed by the grace and drunk for purely religious purposes, as a means of giving thanks to God. As with a Gentile 'toast', the ceremonial sip indicates assent and participation in the intentions expressed over the cup. Similarly in the ceremony of the Kiddush, a ritual cup is hallowed by briefly thanking God for wine and then proceeding at some length to give thanks for his mercies to his people.

In the time of Justin Christians still retained this ancient Jewish view of blessing. The Eucharist and the Last Supper from which it derives are interpreted accordingly. In mediaeval and modern Christian rites, our Lord's acts, taking and blessing bread and wine and declaring them to be his Body and Blood, are briefly imitated during the consecratory prayer. For Justin, on the other hand, our Lord's acts are reproduced in the whole pattern of the sacramental action. The 'taking' occurs, as he explicitly states, at what we call the offertory, when the bread and wine are first brought to the holy table. The 'blessing' or 'giving thanks' is the great prayer uttered by the bishop. The distribution, which



involves, of course, the breaking of the bread, then follows. For Justin and his contemporaries, the Eucharist was something intimately close to the sacred meals of the New Testament. We can see how strongly this bears on the significance of the rite. As with a Jewish ritual cup, the elements are hallowed by the thanksgiving said over them. Justin speaks of the sanctified elements as 'eucharistized' or 'thanked over' bread and wine. The meaning of the great prayer is, as it were, stamped on to them. The bread and wine are thenceforth charged with the realities for which the bishop has uttered thanks. By partaking of the elements, the communicant pledged his commitment to what they mean and identified himself with the bishop's utterance. The reception of Holy Communion was thus inseparably linked with acceptance of the Gospel and dedication to the living of the new life in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

What then did the bishop's great prayer actually say? The passages we have considered certainly give some hint. We can gain a clearer idea from a passage in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* in which he seeks to show how the Old Testament prefigures Christian worship. Here we see clearly the close relations between the Eucharist and the First Day. We can also here catch something of the triumphant spirit of the ancient Eucharistic prayer.

'And the offering of fine flour, sirs, said I, which was commanded to be offered in behalf of those purified from leprosy, was a type of the bread of the Thanksgiving, which Jesus Christ our Lord commanded us to make in remembrance of the Passion which he suffered for those of mankind who purify their souls from all unrighteousness; so that at the same time we might also give thanks to God both for having created the world with everything in it for the sake of man,<sup>2</sup> and for having delivered us from the evil in which we were born, and having destroyed with utter destruction the principalities and powers, through him, who became subject to suffering according to his counsel. Wherefore God says concerning the sacrifices at that time offered by you (i.e., the Jews) . . . "I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands; for from the rising up of the sun unto the going down of the same

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., lxvi.    <sup>2</sup> Much of what follows is based on Col. 2.11-16.

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my name hath been glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered unto my name and a pure offering."<sup>1</sup> . . . He at that time foretells concerning those sacrifices which are offered to him in every place by us Gentiles, that is the bread of the Thanksgiving and the cup likewise of the Thanksgiving, saying also that we glorify his name but that you profane it. The commandment of circumcision, moreover, ordering that the children always be circumcised on the eighth day, was a type of the true circumcision, in which we are circumcised from error and evil by Jesus Christ our Lord rising from the dead on the First Day of the week, for the First Day of the week, while remaining earliest of all days, is called the Eighth if the cycle of all the days be numbered again, and yet it remains first' (*Dial.*, xli).

Here Justin's eucharistic doctrine is unambiguous. The 'sacrifice of Thanksgiving' was given by Christ to his Church as a remembrance of his Passion and as a means for us to return thanks to God for creation and for redemption. This redemption, the deliverance 'from the evil in which we were born', is fulfilled in the 'true circumcision' which proves to have been accomplished by 'Jesus Christ our Lord rising from the dead on the First Day of the week'.

Here then we have the lines along which the great prayer of thanksgiving was composed: it was above all an act of praise for creation and for the redemption accomplished in Christ's victory over death, the two great themes which Justin associates with Sunday. We shall soon see whether this is borne out by such ancient eucharistic prayers as survive. We must realize, however, that the essential meaning of the rite would not be altered if the Eucharist was occasionally performed on another day of the week, or if the content of the bishop's prayer changed considerably from time to time. Justin already hints that there is an intrinsic meaning in the very nature of the eucharistic action itself—the use of bread and wine and their reception as Christ's Body and Blood.

'And this food is called among us Thanksgiving (lit. "Eucharist"). . . . But as by the word of God Jesus Christ our Saviour was

<sup>1</sup> Mal. 1.10-11, a favourite text of the Early Fathers.

incarnate and assumed both flesh and blood for our salvation, so also that food, thanked-over by the prayer of his word (and) by which our blood and bodies are nurtured through digestion, is, we are taught, the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus' (*I Apol.*, lxvi).

The implications of this somewhat obscure line of reasoning are given magnificent clarification by another writer a generation later, St Irenaeus of Lyons. Christian history offers us no more authoritative theologian than he. Having learned the faith from the aged Polycarp, the disciple of St John and others 'who had seen the Lord', Irenaeus can speak as the authentic heir of apostolic Christianity. As the pioneer who laid out the lines from which incarnational theology has never departed, he epitomizes what later ages were to define as Catholic orthodoxy.

Irenaeus does not actually discuss the significance of Sunday in his surviving books, but he does speak of the Eucharist and he amply confirms many of the suggestions we found in Justin.

'... And likewise the cup, which is part of that creation which exists for our benefit, he acknowledged to be his blood and he taught it as the new oblation of the New Covenant. Receiving this from the apostles, the Church offers it throughout the whole world to God, to him who furnishes food to us, as the first fruits of his gifts in the New Covenant. Concerning this Malachi, among the twelve prophets, foretold thus: "... from the rising up of the sun", etc.' (*Against all Heresies*, IV, xvii, 5).

'For as bread from the earth, by receiving the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but is Eucharist, consisting of two elements, an earthly and an heavenly; thus also our bodies, by receiving the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection unto eternity. For we offer to him, not as though he was in need, but as giving thanks for his gift and as sanctifying creation. For God, who is in need of nothing, takes up our good works unto himself for this purpose: that he may give us a means of recompensing his blessings. As our Lord said, "Come ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you. For I was an hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was



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thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in," etc.<sup>1</sup> (Ibid., IV, xviii, 5, 6).

Although speaking within a much broader theological context, Irenaeus clearly has a eucharistic doctrine very similar to that of Justin. Here again we see the view that the Eucharist was given to the Church as a means of offering to God an acceptable 'sacrifice of Thanksgiving'. Irenaeus, furthermore, is able to articulate the insight that by the very fact of using bread and wine the Eucharist involves the acknowledgment of the beneficence of the Creator, and in receiving them as the Body and Blood of Christ we are pledged to belief in his resurrection and our own. It is notable too, that Irenaeus, like Justin, links the Eucharist closely with Christian charity: the gifts to the poor are Christ's own portion of the sacred meal of the *ecclesia*.

Thus we see it was not an accidental reminiscence of Judaism that led the Early Church to use bread and wine in praising God every Sunday. A purely verbal ascription of praise could not have done justice to the incarnational character of the Gospel. It is only by using created things as the 'medicine of immortality'<sup>2</sup> that we can adequately set forth the glory of the Creative and Redemptive God. The Eucharist was thus not only divinely commanded but was indeed the most reasonable form through which and in which Christians could rightly offer to God the worship that is his due each week.

### *Liturgical Texts*

After this doctrinal survey, we now examine the texts of the few eucharistic prayers that have come down to us from the early centuries. The oldest source is apparently the Didache, a Church Order probably coming from Syria, and perhaps contemporary with Irenaeus. It has a brief blessing for the cup and then for the bread, and the following thanksgiving to be used after consuming

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 25.34-6. It is interesting to note that an allusion to this parable was inserted by Cranmer into the canon of the mass in 1549.

<sup>2</sup> Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians*, xx.

the elements. It is disputed whether these formulae really pertain to the Eucharist or to the Agape meal. In either case, however, the following prayer would be normally used on Sunday. Its correspondence to the teaching of Irenaeus is notable.

'We give thanks to thee, Holy Father, for thy holy name which thou madest to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which thou madest known to us through Jesus thy Child: to thee be glory for ever. Thou, Lord Almighty, didst create all things for thy name's sake, and gavest food and drink to men to enjoy, so that they might give thanks to thee; to us, moreover, thou hast granted spiritual food and drink and everlasting life through thy Child. Above all we give thee thanks because thou art mighty: to thee be glory for ever . . .'  
(*Didache*, x).

A generation or two after Irenaeus appears the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome. Here we find a very coherent eucharistic prayer that is the earliest known ancestor of many later liturgies. Here the thanksgiving for creation has been reduced far below what Justin would lead us to expect. The reasons for this are uncertain. Does Hippolytus assume that every reputable bishop will wish to extemporize the opening clauses of his great prayer each week, or has the text been pruned by a later editor? Or is this the first stage in that curtailment of thanksgiving which is later so distinctive of the Roman eucharistic rite? The triumphant thanksgiving for redemption, on the other hand, is very suggestive of Justin and remarkably similar to a passage in Irenaeus.<sup>1</sup> Hippolytus' invocation of the Holy Ghost gives expression to a reality which Justin did not formulate theologically, but which he in fact vividly presented in his description of the unity of the *ecclesia*. Here is a most striking witness to the spirit of worship on the ancient Sunday.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Demonstration (or Proof) of Apostolic Preaching*, xxxviii.

<sup>2</sup> A reasonably acceptable reconstruction of the text of this book is found in *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, B. S. Easton, trans., Cambridge, 1934; and (in a more technical form) *The Apostolic Tradition*, G. Dix, trans., SPCK, 1937. The complete text of the eucharist prayer is given in most modern text-books of liturgiology.

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'We give thanks unto thee, O God, through thy beloved Child Jesus Christ, whom at the last times thou didst send to us as Saviour and Redeemer and the Messenger of thy counsel; who is thy inseparable Word, through whom thou madest all things . . . and who was made flesh . . . who when he was betrayed to his willing passion, that he might bring to nought death, and break the bonds of the devil, and tread hell under foot, and enlighten the righteous, and set up a boundary, and manifest his resurrection, taking bread, giving thanks to thee, he said: Take, eat . . .

'Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection, we offer to thee the bread and the cup, giving thanks to thee, because thou madest us worthy to stand before thee and do thee service.

'And we pray thee that thou wouldst send thy Holy Spirit upon the offering of thy holy Church; that gathering into one all thy saints who partake, thou wouldst grant that they be filled with the Holy Spirit, for the confirmation of faith in the truth, that we may praise and glorify thee . . .' (*Apost. Tradit.*, iv).

A number of early eucharistic prayers are largely adaptations or amplifications of what we find in Hippolytus. A quite different tradition, however, is represented in the *Prayer Book* of Sarapion, an Egyptian bishop of the mid-fourth century. In his day the Egyptian Church had the intellectual and spiritual leadership of Christendom, and Sarapion himself was a personal friend of the great Athanasius. He speaks in a liturgical idiom very different from that of the West, but certainly gives striking expression to precisely the themes of Light, Resurrection, and the Spirit which we have been discussing throughout this study.<sup>1</sup>

'It is meet and right to praise, to hymn, to glorify thee. . . . We praise thee, O invisible Father, provider of immortality. Thou art the fount of life, the fount of light, the fount of all grace and of all truth, O lover of men, O lover of the poor, who art reconciled to all and drawing all to thyself through the advent of thy beloved Son. We beseech thee make us living men. Give us a spirit of light that "we may know thee the True and him whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ". Give us Holy Spirit, that we may be able to utter and to declare thy unspeakable mysteries . . .' (Sarapion, *Prayer i*).

<sup>1</sup> For the full text of Sarapion's liturgy see *Bishop Sarapion's Prayer-Book*, John Wordsworth, trans., SPCK, 1923. The entire eucharistic prayer is given in Dix, *Shape*, pp. 163-4.



The oldest known Latin forms for the opening of the great eucharistic prayer are probably two or three generations later. They come from a North Italian collection now known as Mai's Fragments. Of the two eucharistic texts that survive here, one is very short and offers nothing pertinent to this study. The other is a notable witness to the primitive tradition. It is unfortunate that the language of the text does not permit an altogether graceful translation into English.<sup>1</sup>

'It is meet and right, just and right, that we should above all give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty Everlasting God, who in the incomparable generosity of thy goodness hast vouchsafed to shine in the darkness, by sending Jesus Christ, the Saviour of our souls, who humbling himself for our salvation subjected himself unto death, so that we being restored with that immortality which Adam cast away, he might make us unto himself heirs and sons. For whose graciousness we are not able by any praises to give sufficient thanks to such great loving-kindness of thine, but beseeching thy great and ready mercy to accept this sacrifice, which we offer standing before the face of thy divine mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord and God; through whom we beseech and pray' (fragment breaks off) (Mai's *Eucharistic Prayer*, ii).

These ancient prayers amply substantiate the suggestions which we found in Justin and Irenaeus. Here is the authentic voice of the ancient Christian *ecclesia*. Here is a worship which is not primarily concerned with moral inspiration, or human self-improvement, or what the secular world calls religious sentiment. Here rather the Church speaks as the New Israel,

'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' (I Peter 2.9).

It is in this spirit that the Church offered its 'sacrifice of thanksgiving' every Lord's Day, not in the darkness of gentile ignorance, nor in the self-righteousness of the law of the Israel, but in

<sup>1</sup> For original text see Dix., *Shape*, p. 540, or Migne's *Patrologia latina*, Vol. XIII, col. 611-12.

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assurance of the faith of Jesus Christ. Thus the Church offered creation's praise to its Maker, using the bread and wine its Redeemer had taught, and in this worship Christ's people experienced his gift of the new life in the Holy Spirit.

In the later centuries, we can find these themes repeatedly expressed in the Eastern liturgies. In the West, however, a change gradually occurred. Preoccupation with the distinctive themes of the different liturgical seasons led to a neglect of the thanksgiving for creation, and the Resurrection and gift of the Spirit received little attention except during the seasons devoted to their commemoration. Ultimately the Nicene Creed, rather than the great eucharistic prayer, came to be accepted as the principal expression of these truths in the Eucharist. The confession of the trinitarian faith thus lost its organic relation to the consecratory action. The Roman rite, which has a minimum of thanksgiving, finally predominated throughout Latin Christendom. This comparative absence of thanksgiving for creation likewise appears in the vernacular eucharistic rites of the Reformation.

The old views, however, did not die out overnight. About the year 800, for instance, St Theodulf of Orleans, one of the leading divines of the Carolingian renaissance, published his *Capitular* for his clergy, in which is a classic statement concerning the First Day.

### *On Observing the Lord's Days*

'Since on it God established light; on it he rained manna in the wilderness; on it the Redeemer of the human race voluntarily rose from the dead for our salvation; on it he poured out the Holy Ghost upon his disciples—the Lord's Day should be so well observed that besides prayers and the celebration of the Mass and what pertains to eating, nothing else should be done . . . rather the time must be free for God alone, namely in the celebration of holy offices and the giving of alms, and spiritual feasting in the praises of God together with one's friends, neighbours, and strangers' (Theodulf's *I Capit.*, xxiv).

'On Lord's Days . . . it is to be arranged that everyone come to public holy mother church to hear the celebration of Mass and the preaching. It is likewise decreed that in a city in which a bishop

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is located all the presbyters and people, both of the city and its environs, ought to stand in due array with devout heart at the same Mass until the blessing of the bishop and the Communion. Then afterwards, if they wish, having received the blessing and the Communion, they are permitted to return to their parishes. And this is especially to be avoided by the priests . . . that the people should be able to withdraw themselves at all from the Mass or from the preaching of the bishop . . . ' (Ibid., *additio*<sup>1</sup>).

This document was widely circulated during the Middle Ages, and similar views were often voiced elsewhere, although, as time went on, the tone gradually changed. Traces of the Carolingian tradition still linger in this rubric in the present English Prayer Book:

'And in Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, and Colleges, where there are many Priests and Deacons, they shall all receive the Communion with the Priest every Sunday at the least . . . ' (*Book of Common Prayer*, Communion rubrics).

During the past centuries, however, such regulations have neither been understood nor observed. The corporate conception of Sunday, as the day when the Church makes manifest the Communion of Saints, has been inadequately appreciated even by those most devoted to sacramental worship.

### *The Wholeness of Worship*

It is important that we clearly understand what is meant by the deterioration of Sunday worship in mediaeval and modern times. Christians of any age would certainly have some appreciation of the kind of Sunday pictured by Justin or Theodulf. Down through the centuries Christians have always regarded Sunday as a time of worship, of hearing sermons, of receiving the sacraments, of giving alms, and of engaging in fraternal hospitality. The trouble is that these different activities have lost their theological connection with Sunday and with each other. They have become simply

<sup>1</sup> For translation of entire text see G. E. McCracken and Allen Cabaniss, *Early Medieval Theology, The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. IX. Philadelphia and London, 1957, pp. 382-99.



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a variety of miscellaneous actions which may be conveniently performed on a holiday associated with religion.

The objective results of this disintegration are fully apparent. The modern Christian on one Sunday may attend the parish service in which he praises God as Creator and Redeemer and hears a sermon. The next week he may go to an early service with a few others to make his Communion. Another Sunday he may go to the city to visit an invalid aunt and fail to get to church at all. In Lent he may attend a penitential service such as would be more fitting for Friday than for Sunday. At all of these services he will be asked for alms, but the sum expected will be so trivial that any mention of sacrifice is ludicrous. (Truly sacrificial giving to religious or charitable causes is made on a week-day, with a cheque mailed in an envelope.) At all of these services he may join in a profession of faith and in some acts of praise, but neither of these now appears to have any bearing on the consecration of Holy Communion.

The dissociation of the ordinary Sunday from the fact of the Resurrection is not a matter of one writer's opinion. There are countless parish churches in Christendom that are well filled throughout Lent and are packed on Easter Day. Yet on those glorious Sundays of the Great Fifty Days, the congregations regularly decline. The facts speak for themselves.

Modern Christendom has not given up any of the specific Sunday actions of which Justin or Theodulf speaks: what it has given up is the principle of unity which binds all of these together. Holy Communion has simply become one form of devotion among many, whereas the primitive Eucharist was a comprehensive rite in which the full Gospel was set forth, the fulness of praise was uttered, the fulness of Christian community life was actually experienced. This unity was not just a convenience, not just a device for harmonizing a great variety of things in one service—this unity, rather, pertains to the essence of what the Eucharist is; it is part of the very nature of what Christianity is. It is a fundamental purpose of Sunday worship to set forth the

integrity and wholeness of redeemed humanity. By reducing to fragments the Sunday liturgy, we have obscured a crowning glory of the religion of the New Covenant. This is not a question of seeking to advocate a particular eucharistic doctrine, or of contending for one of the conflicting explanations of the Real Presence; rather it is a question of recognizing the all-inclusive scope of the reign of Christ. What we need is not an adequate theological expression of eucharistic doctrine, but rather a Eucharist that adequately expresses Christian doctrine. The issue is not over sacraments as such, it is an issue over Christ, in whom all fulness dwells, and through whose blood all things are reconciled unto God, 'whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven' (Col. 1.20).

'And now we are arrived at Christ, we are where we should, our gathering is at the best. All in Heaven, all in earth, gathered together, together again—again into one, one even whereof Christ is the foot, one body whereof Christ is the Head. Gather then, and be gathered to him; gather then, and be gathered with him. . . .

'For as there is a recapitulation of all in Heaven and earth in Christ, so there is a recapitulation of all in Christ in the holy Sacrament. You may see it clearly: there is in Christ the Word eternal for things in Heaven; there is also flesh for things on earth. Semblably, the Sacrament consisteth of a Heavenly and of a terrene part (it is Irenaeus' own words). . . .

'Now for the word "gathering together in one". It is well known the holy Eucharist itself is called *Synaxis*, by no name more usual in antiquity, that is a "collection or gathering". For so it is in itself; for at the celebration of it . . . is the principal gathering the Church hath, which is itself called a "collection" (Heb. 10.25) too by the same name from the chief . . .' (Lancelot Andrewes, *Nativity Sermon*, XVI).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# SUNDAY AND CHRISTIAN INITIATION

'Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2.5, 6).

CHRISTIAN Initiation is inescapably bound up with the meaning of the Lord's Day. As the latter represents the new life in Christ, so likewise the admission to that life is associated with Sunday and normally performed on that day. This association goes back to the earliest stage of Christian history.

Our Lord's own Baptism was the great revelation of the Holy Trinity. As described in the Gospels the descent of the Spirit inevitably suggests the First Day of Creation in retrospect and Pentecost in prospect.<sup>1</sup> In Matthew and Mark it is the risen Jesus who authorizes his apostles to baptize.<sup>2</sup> The remission of sins, spoken of in the parallels in Luke and John,<sup>3</sup> was anciently understood primarily in regard to this same sacrament. In John and Acts, this authority is linked with the gift of the Holy Ghost at Easter or Pentecost respectively.<sup>4</sup> In the Epistles, we find a highly developed symbolism. Entrance into the Church is a re-creation and admission to the realm of light.<sup>5</sup> The waters of Baptism are compared to the grave of Christ, to birth, and to the water of the Flood, and of the Red Sea.<sup>6</sup> The Holy Ghost who is given is the assurance of membership in the Family of God, the earnest of an eternal inheritance, and the life of those who walk by faith.<sup>7</sup> Already in New Testament times Christian Initiation was thus

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 3.11-17; Mark 1.8-11; Luke 3.16-22; John 1.32-4.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 28.19; Mark 16.15-16.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 24.46-9; John 20.22-3.

<sup>4</sup> John 20.22-3; Acts 1.5-8; 2.38-41.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. 2.10; Col. 1.12-13; 3.10; I Peter 2.9; I John 1.7.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. 6.3-5; I Cor. 10. 1-2; Col. 2.12; Titus 3.5; I Peter 3.18-21.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. 8.1-16; Gal. 4.6; Eph. 1.13-14; Titus 3.5-7; I John 4.13.



closely linked with the series of ideas we have been studying. Let us now see how these conceptions found expression in Christian practice.

*The Classical Rites*

Our first description of an established procedure is again given by St Justin in the middle of the second century. After receiving Christian instruction, converts spend a period in prayer and fasting. They then receive the washing of regeneration in

'the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe. . . . And in the name of Jesus Christ who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus' (*I Apol.*, lxi).

They are then brought into the congregation and prayer is said for them. The usual intercessions, the kiss of peace, offertory, and so on follow, as we have already seen in our examination of the Eucharist.

The account of the latter is indeed a continuation of the discussion of Baptism, but it is not clear to what extent Justin consciously regards Baptism as one of the things performed on Sunday because the Risen Saviour taught them on this day. Allusions to the opening verses of Genesis occur in the accompanying discussion of the Trinity, and certainly the creation of light invites comparison with Justin's statement that Baptism is spoken of as Illumination, and the reference to the primeval waters would seem to have some analogy with the waters of rebirth. More significant, perhaps, is the direct way that the baptismal rites admitted the neophyte into the Family of God. Thereafter, in the regular assembly of the *ecclesia*, he would week by week participate in the Thanksgiving that celebrated the very creative and redemptive acts of God which had been brought to bear on his own life in Baptism. Baptism in the threefold Name and the Eucharist consecrated by thanksgiving to the Trinity obviously stand in the closest relation to each other.

The rites briefly and vaguely described by Justin are set forth

in clear detail by Hippolytus. Certainly some liturgical development had occurred during the half century that separated the *Apology* from the *Apostolic Tradition*, but basically it is the same procedure. Remarkably enough, it remained substantially the same in most of Christendom for several centuries afterwards. We can, therefore, speak properly of a 'classical' system of Christian Initiation. These rites reflect an age during which the spiritual, moral, and intellectual training of converts was regarded as one of the major responsibilities of the ecclesiastical institution. The extraordinarily complicated system of initiation represents the early Church's most systematic and comprehensive effort to articulate the meaning of Christianity.

According to the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, a new convert is to spend about three years in preliminary instruction, during which his life is under careful surveillance.<sup>1</sup> One could not simply 'join' the Christian Church. One had to withdraw from pagan interests and loyalties and gradually grow into a whole new way of life in a despised little community that one had previously regarded as a gang of depraved foreign fanatics. For the ordinary early Christian as for St Paul, to die with Christ was neither a far-fetched metaphor nor a mere act of ceremonial. It was an intensely real and intensely painful experience of sacrificing all the things on which one's security and self-respect had been based.

The persevering catechumen was finally admitted to a class of candidates for Baptism. Probably for several weeks the class received intensive training. They were now resolved to take that step which, for any one of them, might lead directly to the lions in the arena. They were constantly subjected to the humiliating and highly emotional ordeal of exorcisms intended to deliver them from Satan. Hysteria and convulsions were apparently not uncommon results. Psychologically they were shaken down to the very roots of their being.

The climax of this long and devastating process was strikingly linked with our topic, the Christian week. In Hippolytus' time, and

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., Part II.



perhaps even from the beginning,<sup>1</sup> solemn Baptism was certainly normally administered at Easter or during the subsequent Fifty Days.<sup>2</sup> The only actual requirement stated by the *Apostolic Tradition*, however, was that it be on Sunday. On Friday the candidates fasted, presumably very strictly. Saturday night, as we would say, or the beginning of Sunday by Jewish and Early Christian reckoning, was devoted to an all-night vigil, doubtless without food or drink. Here the final instructions were given. Exhausted by fatigue, hunger, and fear, the candidates were led to the water early on Sunday morning and stripped to the skin.<sup>3</sup>

The actual christening was very complicated. The presbyters and deacons (and, in the East, deaconesses) of the Church's Staff divided between them, under the bishop's direction, the different rôles to be performed. They then put the candidates through a dramatic series of renunciations, affirmations, immersions, and anointings.

What especially concerns us is the baptismal formula. Mediaeval and modern Christians have generally assumed that the sacrament is actually effected by applying water to the candidate while the minister declares that he is performing Baptism 'in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost'. On the basis of our Lord's 'Great Commission' (Matt. 28.19) this baptismal formula is assumed to be divinely ordained. Patristic references to Baptism in the Name of the Trinity were supposed to illustrate the universal use of such a formula. It is only in recent years, with the reconstitution of the *Apostolic Tradition*, that the truth has emerged. Hippolytus is in fact totally ignorant of any such declaratory baptismal formula. The sacramental act was performed as follows. While the candidate stands in the water, one of the clergy asks:

<sup>1</sup> For indications, see F. L. Cross, *I Peter, A Paschal Liturgy*, London, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, *On Baptism*, xix.

<sup>3</sup> Even those last symbols of self-respect, a woman's rings and hair pins, were unsparingly removed. The baptismal candidates had to be not only nude but positively naked.



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'Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty?' The candidate replies, 'I believe', and is plunged into the water.

Then he is asked: 'Dost thou believe in Christ Jesus the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Ghost from the Virgin Mary', etc. (much as in the present Apostles' Creed)? He replies, 'I believe', and is plunged again.

Lastly he is asked: 'Dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost and the holy Church and the resurrection of the flesh?' He replies, 'I believe', and is plunged the third time.

Once we understand the procedure, it is very clear and very logical. Baptism in the Name of the Trinity did not mean that the minister should merely say the Name, but rather that the candidate should be initiated into it by professing his faith in the Trinity. This use of the baptismal Creed as the actual sacramental formula is certainly what is referred to by Justin and other Church Fathers. The same procedure was virtually universal, although the exact wording of the Creed varied in different localities.<sup>1</sup>

Later Christians have regarded the baptismal Creed as a test to determine whether one is or is not qualified to receive the sacrament. For Hippolytus, however, one has already undergone three years of testing. The baptismal Creed is thus not a preliminary to Baptism, but an integral and essential part of the sacramental act. Some of the later conflicts over the relative importance of faith and sacraments thus collapse. This is *a sacrament of faith*.

The Creed, furthermore, constitutes the baptismal formula not because it is a legal shibboleth, but because it actually expresses what Baptism means. Here we do become children of the 'Father of lights . . . (who) begat us with the word of truth' (James 1.17, 18). Here by faith we are made members of Christ and have a new birth by the Spirit through him who was born for us by the same Spirit. Here we die and enter through Christ into a new and unending life. Or, to express these same things in a third way, here the Holy Ghost makes us members of the Holy Church and

<sup>1</sup> For able discussion of the whole question see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, London and New York, 1950, Chapters II and III.

inheritors of Heaven and (as later generations added) we are given forgiveness of sins and admission to the Communion of Saints.

As a new-born babe was brought to the ancient paterfamilias for acceptance into the family,<sup>1</sup> so the neophyte went from the font to the bishop to be received with the paternal laying on of hands and embrace. The bishop solemnly blessed each one, blessing the God who gave them rebirth in the Holy Spirit. This prayer, the Confirmation Prayer as we still have it (e.g. in the *Book of Common Prayer*) is, as it were, the bishop's response to the candidate's affirmation of the Baptismal Creed. It clearly affirms that God does to the neophyte those things in which the latter has placed his hope.

Contrary to modern practice, Confirmation was not left hanging in an ecclesiastical vacuum. It was for Hippolytus an unambiguous stepping stone from the font to the holy table. As a member of the Christian family, as a spiritual child of the bishop, one was at once joyously received at the family meal. Here the same bishop consecrated the elements with a thanksgiving prayer which dwelt on the very things which one had affirmed in Baptism. The relationship of Baptism, Confirmation, and First Communion was reinforced by a peculiar use of three chalices administered with formulae summarizing again the trinitarian Creed.

Anyone who had experienced these things would clearly understand that Baptism and Confirmation were precisely the admission into that fulness of grace which was reaffirmed and re-experienced every week thereafter in the Sunday liturgy. Baptism and Confirmation were not administered in order to give certain special benefits or to meet the needs of some special stage in the individual's life. They were intended to communicate rather the wholeness of that life and abundance which God intends for us to have. Here one was remade as 'his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2.10). Here one experienced the Easter of one's own life: rising from the font early in the morning, receiving that assurance of forgiveness which the risen Lord entrusted to his

<sup>1</sup> W. W. Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*, London, 1911, pp. 83-4.



apostles with the power of the Holy Ghost, and then at last knowing Christ himself in the Breaking of Bread. Here was one's own Pentecost: Baptism by water and by the Spirit, and admission into 'the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers' (Acts 2.42). Here one knew these things, not merely as abstract ideas nor as remote historical events, but as immediate realities which in fact totally changed the whole course of one's life and provided a whole new basis for one's future existence. Here one did find a new heart and a new soul to replace the pagan self that had been drowned. In the fellowship of the faithful, one did find the new humanity of the glorious Body of Christ.

The next several centuries saw substantially the same procedure practised throughout Christendom. In many localities the main modification of Hippolytus' order was the fixed rule that except in emergencies, Baptism should always be at Eastertide. The several weeks of intensive final preparation thus became crystallized as Lent. The Baptism was Easter morning and the First Communion was the Easter Eucharist.<sup>1</sup> For those whose Baptism had to be delayed for sickness or other cause, Whitsunday provided a second opportunity when the same rites were repeated.

### *Mediaeval and Modern Usage*

Easter and Whitsunday did not everywhere maintain this complete monopoly on Christian Initiation. The theme of re-birth naturally suggested a connection with that other cycle of the liturgical year, the feasts of the Incarnation. Epiphany, commemorating both our Lord's birth and his own Baptism, naturally became a date for Solemn Baptism in the East and occasionally also in the West. Such a development was not without value, and in the Eastern liturgies especially, the interpretation of Epiphany is in some ways approximated to Easter. Its history, however, falls outside the scope of this study.

<sup>1</sup> For typical examples of the procedure, *St Ambrose on the Sacraments and on the Mysteries*, T. Thompson, trans., and J. H. Srawley, edit., SPCK, 1950, and *St Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, R. W. Church, trans., and F. L. Cross, edit., SPCK 1951.



In cathedral cities in many parts of Europe, the great Baptism at Easter remained important even in the tenth or eleventh century.<sup>1</sup> The prevalence of infant Baptism and consequent curtailment of pre-baptismal training made it easy, however, to hold additional Baptisms at other dates. Meanwhile the evangelization of remoter rural areas led to a village Christianity unblessed by contacts with the cathedral or the bishop. Here there predominated a brief and essentially emergency rite, administered by a presbyter alone, at any season of the year. This, of course, is the basis of our modern customs. Yet the close link between Baptism and the Lord's Day was not everywhere forgotten. At the end of the eighth century, a council legislating for missionary work in Central Europe, adopted the following compromise:

'The question was first raised regarding the holy laver of regeneration; primarily and particularly, regarding what times it ought to be conferred on catechumens, apart from the demands of recognized necessity.<sup>2</sup> It was ascertained at once, and proven by the sacred pages of Scriptures, that there are but two legitimate times . . . that is, the most solemn feast of Easter and Pentecost, the glorious coming of the Holy Ghost in tongues of fire. (Long discussion follows.)

' . . . in view of the conversion of these tribes and the scarcity of priests, it was next to be considered how Easter and Pentecost might legitimately be anticipated.

'We know, moreover, that the holy and revered joy of Easter and the coming of the Holy Ghost which is Pentecost, have been combined in the Lord's Day. And during every week on the First Day, which is the Lord's Day, we celebrate the solemn gladness of the Resurrection and the glory of the ineffable presence of the Holy Ghost. If, therefore, by a happy presumption under this circumstance we do not fear to anticipate the aforesaid times, neither by any rash venture do we presume, except when death is imminent, to disregard the sacred date of

<sup>1</sup> There seems to be virtually no current secondary literature available on this topic. For indication of certain relevant sources, see n. 2, p. 47 above.

<sup>2</sup> It was always understood that a catechumen in good standing, or later a child of Christian parents, could have baptism on immediate demand if dying.

the Lord's Day . . .' (The Meeting of Bishops on the Banks of the Danube, AD 796).<sup>1</sup>

Here is the classic view of the First Day. Even in the irregular and unpredictable circumstances of missionary work in a newly conquered and barbaric land, these bishops regard the relation of Sunday to Holy Baptism as a basic principle of order which could not be abandoned. Their reasoning, as the accompanying discussion demonstrates, was theological. In the rites of Christian Initiation, we are resurrected in Christ and we are given a new birth by his Spirit; these rites must, therefore, be conferred on the day on which took place those mysteries which are the basis of this new life in Christ.

It is interesting to find the question approached in a somewhat similar spirit eight hundred years later:

'It appeareth by auncient writers, that the Sacrament of Baptisme in the olde tyme was not commonlye ministred but at two tymes in the year, at Easter and Whitsontyde, at whiche tymes it was openlye ministred in the presence of all the congregacion: Whiche custome (now beeyng growen out of use) although it cannot for many consideracions be well restored agayne, yet it is thought good to folowe the same as nere as conveniently maye be: wherefore the people are to be admonished that it is most convenient that Baptisme should not be ministred but upon Sondayes and other holye dayes, when the most nombre of people may come together . . .' (*Book of Common Prayer*, 1549, Baptismal Rubric).

Here the force of the ancient tradition is still felt. The doctrinal link is still there, as the contents of Cranmer's order makes abundantly clear. Cranmer is obviously more interested in securing the public character of the rite than he is in relating it to the calendar, yet the 'convenience' he speaks of refers to duty and appropriateness, not to facility. It is 'convenient' to christen on Sundays and feasts because on these days the people of God gather in his house. Later generations, unfortunately, have read

<sup>1</sup> *Monumenta Germanicae Historica, Legum sectio III, Concila*, Tom. II, *Concilia aevi karolini* I, Albert Werminghoff, edit., Hanover and Leipzig, 1906. Item 20, pp. 172-6.

an abbreviated form of this rubric in a less theological sense. It has come to be assumed that Baptisms are on Sunday simply because it is easier to have a congregation on that day.

In fact there has been a tragic loss of understanding of the whole seriousness of Christian Initiation, as responsible Christian leaders are becoming increasingly well aware. There is no immediate way to regain the full dignity of these rites; better Christian education, better conceptions of Christian family life, liturgical reform, and so on, are all part of the necessary re-building. A more theological understanding of the calendar can certainly contribute greatly to this process. The ordinary parent or god-parent is far more aware of the date chosen for a christening than he is of the content of the prayers used. A similar consciousness of the date may be felt by candidates looking forward to Confirmation. The translation of that date, from a number on a calendar into a lively symbol of the Gospel of God, is a major opportunity for the religious teacher.

The Lord Christ, who hath hallowed the span of this day both by the first light of creation and now by the mystery of his resurrection, himself both enlighten in you that which he hath created and sanctify forever that which he hath redeemed. And may he who hath shown justification to the world by his resurrection, cleanse you from all stain of human filth. So may the death of sin come to you through him, through whom ye desire to rise again and come to glory (Mozarabic blessing, Matins of Easter).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Oracional visigotico*, Jose Vives, edit., *Monumenta Hispaniae sacra, serie liturgica*, Vol. I, Barcelona, 1956, p. 282.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

# SUNDAY AND OTHER RITES

'And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ' (Eph. 4.11, 12).

WE have surveyed the principal rites regularly associated with Sunday, but it would be erroneous to suppose that the liturgical influence of Sunday stopped with these. Without attempting to run the whole gamut of Christian sacramental and devotional practice, we should at least briefly note some of the other rites closely involved with our topic.

### *The Ordination of Clergy*

We have frequently alluded to the functions of the clergy. In antiquity that paternal leadership which the bishop embodied and that stable organization represented by the presbyters and deacons, were indispensable constituents of normal church life. Since Sunday worship presented the life of the church in tangible and visible form, the holders of these offices filled liturgical rôles that were strictly analogous to their various administrative and institutional responsibilities.

Looked at in another sense, a particular kind of liturgical worship demands a particular sort of officiant to carry it out. If every Sunday was to recapture Easter and Pentecost, then the apostles had to be represented. They were not only participants in the original events, but they quite specifically had been entrusted with the message and the ordinances that were to carry the power and reality of those events into the wide stream of human life. Seen in this light, the apostolic status claimed for the bishops was not a legalistic device for gaining hieratic power, but was, rather, an

integral part of what church life was intended to be. Ministerial succession was one of the cherished links which bound the faithful in every city with that original little band of eleven men in Jerusalem. Modern theories of the sacred ministry have stressed its prophetic, pastoral, or priestly aspects, but they have not generally succeeded in regaining this incarnational and organic quality of the ministry of the ancient *ecclesia*.

It is thus not surprising that ancient ordinations occurred in the context of Sunday worship, and so it is specifically directed in the *Apostolic Tradition*, our earliest text of the ordination rites.<sup>1</sup> The actual ordination consists, of course, of the laying on of hands with prayer. In the case of the newly ordained bishop, he immediately receives the kiss of peace from all his people, goes to the holy table and, as father of his flock, takes the bread and wine and proceeds to celebrate the Eucharist. The single act of ordination thus represents both consecration and enthronement. Newly ordained presbyters and deacons doubtless also at once joined the others of their order and ministered accordingly in the Eucharist, the presbyters as concelebrants and the deacons as servers. They were thus instituted into office as well as ordained. Sacramental function was strictly co-relative with holy order.

Hippolytus' ordination prayers are of great interest. The one for bishops alludes to the love and mercy of God the Father, and to Abraham and 'the princes and priests' of old. More particularly, it petitions for the Holy Ghost and the high-priestly powers which Christ conferred on his apostles. Here, quite explicitly, is a ministry intended to carry out the commission of the Risen Jesus. The presbyters' ordination prayer speaks of the presbyters (i.e. the Jewish elders) chosen by Moses and petitions for the Spirit's gift of wisdom and ability to govern well. The prayer for deacons alludes to the sending of Jesus Christ (who was the 'Deacon' of the Father) and petitions for the Spirit's gift of that 'care and diligence' appropriate to the deacon's rôle.

Unlike the Latin ordination prayers of the later Roman Church,

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., Part I.

any specific reference to the Levitical ministry of the Old Israel is carefully avoided. Hippolytus' view of the latter is evidently that of St Stephen and Justin Martyr.<sup>1</sup> The earthly ministry of the New Covenant is a priesthood of faith, and its most ancient prototype is Abraham. Our next oldest text of ordination prayers coming from a quite different source are those of Sarapion, and these have substantially the same allusions except that a reference to the Seven in Acts has been added to the prayer for deacons.<sup>2</sup> The language of typology may be puzzling to the modern reader, but for the ancient Christian there was nothing vague or ambiguous about the sense of these prayers. They confer a ministry organically linked with the life and worship of the *ecclesia*. The clergy are to be the Spirit-guided officers of the New Israel, the priestly people which offers itself as a living sacrifice to God. The clergy exercise special gifts of the Spirit, but these are precisely for the benefit of all, for

'we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another' (Rom. 12.5).

For the Early Church, this conception of the ministry was not an abstract academic doctrine. It was something that every Christian saw every Sunday morning, when his bishop stood at the holy table, with the presbyters standing around him, and the deacons carried up the bread and wine which the lay-people had provided. There in the Eucharist, the many members knew what it was to be 'one body', even the Body of Christ.

### *Evening Worship*

There was one thing the ancient Eucharist did not include, and that was the meal which at the Last Supper had come in between the blessing of the bread and of the wine. The sacramental food was, from very early times, understood to require a unique rite of its own, normally celebrated in the morning, to commemorate the

<sup>1</sup> Acts 7.47-51; *Dialogue*, xxii, cxvii.

<sup>2</sup> *Bishop Sarapion's Prayer-Book*, Part III.



Resurrection as Cyprian says.<sup>1</sup> The evening religious meal remained, however, as an element in church life.

Already in New Testament times,<sup>2</sup> Gentile Christians were not too interested in this type of Jewish ceremonial meal in which the conversation was supposed to consist of Bible stories and moralistic advice from the old people. In the Church Orders of the age of the Fathers, the 'Lord's Supper' or Agape appears to have survived mainly as an occasional charity supper given to the widows and the poor, sometimes merely a blessing over the food which was then given them to take to their own homes.<sup>3</sup> It was to some extent associated with the beginning and ending of the Lord's Day, i.e., what we would call Saturday evening and Sunday evening.

The characteristic ceremony, inherited from Judaism, was the blessing of the lamp. At official Christian gatherings this was performed by a clergyman. As in Judaism, the lamp was blessed by blessing God the Giver of light. This inevitably became a thanksgiving for the Light of Christ. At a very early date this took the form of the Greek hymn known to English-speaking Christians as 'O gladsome light', or other translations.<sup>4</sup>

A similar blessing was performed on those occasions, such as Easter eve, when an evening service was to be held and, consequently, a light was needed in church. In the cathedrals of larger cities, it ultimately became customary to hold at least a brief vigil, for the clergy and pious laity, every Saturday night. Thus the lamp-lighting, with accompanying prayers and thanksgivings for light, became a purely liturgical rite performed in church, entirely disconnected from the Agape meal. The Song of Simeon, the *Nunc dimittis*, naturally found a fitting place in such a service.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cyprian, *To Caecilius*, Epist. LXII, xvi.      <sup>2</sup> I Cor. 11.18-22.

<sup>3</sup> *Apostolic Tradition*, Part III, and, in Easton's translation, 'Later Additions'.

<sup>4</sup> 'O gladsome light', Robert Bridges, trans.; 'O Brightness of the immortal Father's face', E. W. Eddis, trans.; 'Hail, gladdening Light', J. Keble, trans. There are numerous other versions also.

<sup>5</sup> The oldest evidence of its liturgical use seems to be the *Apostolic Constitutions*, VII, xlvi. See *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VII, New York, 1899, p. 478.

With the fuller development of Christian worship after the time of Constantine, the service of Evensong, originally associated primarily with preparation for Sunday, came to be extended to other days. The history of Matins, although still obscure, is somewhat analogous. As the daily evening service developed from the opening of the ancient vigil, so the daily morning service appears to have derived, in part at least, from the conclusion of the vigil.

### *The Paschal Solemnities*

As Easter and Whitsunday provide the ground for all other Sundays in the year, it is relevant to note certain special rites that came to be associated with these feasts during the course of Christian history. During the mediaeval period the vigil service with which Easter opened and the shorter vigil of Whitsunday received great ceremonial elaboration. It may be a matter of surprise to some to know that these rites can in fact be entirely accounted for on the basis of practices which we have already considered during this study.

The lighting of the new fire on Easter Eve and the blessing of the paschal candle is simply a special development of that blessing of the lamp which anciently preceded any service at night. The paschal candle was large since it had to furnish illumination for a vigil of such great length. The vigil itself is a vestige of the final instruction given to the baptismal candidates. It was not part of the Eucharist, but should be compared rather to Matins. From early times, in both East and West, this instruction was usually based on twelve lessons or 'prophecies' from the Old Testament. The exact choice of passages varied somewhat in different localities, but it almost always opened with the beginning of Genesis and went on to include such material as the story of the Flood, Abraham's offering of Isaac, and the crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>1</sup> The whole rite is thus intimately related to the themes we have been studying.

<sup>1</sup> A good survey of the passages normally used is given in J. W. Tyrer, *Historical Survey of Holy Week*, Alcuin Club Collections, no. xxix, 1932, pp. 156-7.

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The font was then blessed, and Baptism and Confirmation were administered with great solemnity. The litany was chanted while the neophytes and clergy went from the baptistry to the church. The Easter Eucharist followed and the new Christians made their First Communion on this joyful occasion. In the Roman rite a simplified version of this same procedure was followed at Whitsunday.

The paschal solemnities thus consisted of material which, at one time or another, has also been used on other Sundays: lamp-lighting, vigil office, Baptism and Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist. On Easter, however, and to a lesser extent at Whitsunday, these things acquire their most direct and most authentic significance. They give expression to that central core of meaning that is then carried over into other Sundays. There could scarcely be a more vivid statement of what Sunday means than the commencement of the Easter vigil, when the reader opens the book and reads of the Spirit brooding over the waters, and the creation of light, and the formation of heaven and earth. On the one hand, the church has just been lighted with the new fire symbolizing the light of the risen Christ. On the other hand, the water of the font will soon be blessed and Christian Initiation administered. Here new souls will be justified by faith and made spiritual progeny of Abraham. Here sins will be forgiven, and the Holy Ghost will be bestowed. Then, as all turn once more to the east end of the church, the Eucharist will be performed and the Lord Jesus will make himself known in the Breaking of Bread and the Cup of his New Covenant.

‘Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit’ (Eph. 2.19-22).



## CHAPTER NINE

### 'THEN COMETH THE END'

'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father' (I Cor. 15.22-4).

ALL things in the Christian life are carried out in faith, hope, and charity, looking forward to the glory that is yet to be revealed. This is pre-eminently true of the Sunday gathering of the faithful. On the Eighth Day, the perpetual First Day of a new age, this view of eternity comes into focus. Then, in a particular sense, our heavenly citizenship is clearly and unequivocally affirmed. This of course is why attendance at the Eucharist has been a crime both in ancient Rome and in modern concentration camps. Here we renew our allegiance each week to the Jerusalem that is above, here we are given some vision of the hope of our calling.

On Sunday this is given to us not merely in homiletic exhortations to belief or catechetical declarations of the faith, but in the actual living experience of a full and comprehensive worship. The Scripture readings come to us, as St Augustine somewhere says, 'as letters from home'. The preacher speaks as one who has discovered, in living a life consecrated to God, the certainty of the truth that is in Jesus. In corporate intercessory prayer, we share in the actual working of that power whereby Jesus is able even to subdue all things unto himself. In the offertory Christians, as a priestly people, present to the Creator tokens of his creation that is being renewed in Christ. In the eucharistic Thanksgiving, all of these things are summed up in the recounting of the victory of the Son of God, who even now deigns to invite his people to eat and drink with him. At the same time the faithful perform that sharing with the poor which is the promised work of those for

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whom the Kingdom has been prepared. In doing all of these things we learn the reality of the Holy Ghost who is the pledge of our inheritance, the Spirit of the new age inaugurated in Christ, and our foretaste of the glory to come.

The experience of these acts makes heaven meaningful to the believer; it makes the Christian hope a significant and positive force in the ordering of life. The heavenly citizenship becomes something that can be seriously practised; the Christian goal becomes something toward which daily existence may in fact be oriented. The worshipper can go home to say grace over his Sunday dinner with the knowledge that earthly life and all that sustains it has become holy in Christ. He can enjoy the company of his relatives and neighbours for the rest of the day with the assurance that such fellowship has a meaning in God's eternal plan. He can endeavour to cheer the ungrateful, the ailing, and the forlorn, for he has the perception of what is infinitely precious behind the dull eye or unsmiling mouth. He can drive through the countryside on Sunday afternoon, or survey the spires and bridges of the city, and be certain that in his good time God will gather an unperishing harvest from the field and vineyard of this earth.

It is in the knowledge of these things that the Christian life is lived; that Christian work is accomplished; and that the Christian death is died. For this God has given us his Day: unto this Day there is no night.

Now unto the King  
eternal, immortal, invisible,  
the only wise God,  
be honour and glory  
for ever  
and ever.  
Amen.

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